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October 24, 1882.

Vol. XI.

Single
Number.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

No. 274.

JOLLY JIM, The DETECTIVE APPRENTICE; Or, HARRY KEEN'S BIG "LAY."

BY CHARLES MORRIS,

AUTHOR OF "BOB ROCKETT, THE BANK RUNNER," "BOB ROCKETT, THE BOY DODGER," "WILL WILDFIRE," "DARK PAUL," ETC., ETC.



[THE TWO SPORTS BURST INTO A ROAR OF LAUGHTER ON SEEING JOLLY JIM'S WELL-PLASTERED FACE.]

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"If it was only as easy to light it as it is this pipe. But hang it all—Eh?"

He stopped puffing at the pipe, and looked quietly around.

"S'pose you pass a feller a light, afore that there match goes out," came in a boy's voice from his elbow.

The person upon whom he looked was an odd one. It was a boy, well grown and of good figure, but dressed in a dilapidated garb, which looked as if it had been at least twice worn out before he fell heir to it. His face was as sharp and keen as that of a fox. He had evidently been well rubbed on the grindstone of life, and had cut his eye-teeth at a very early age. In his hand he held a cigar stump, which he had taken from the table.

"Reckon I'll take a puff with you, Mr. Keen," continued the impudent-faced gamin. "So gi'n us a light."

"Hallo, Jolly! It's you, is it? Puff away then, little pigeon; and take care you don't draw your chin through the back of your neck."

"Can't spare it," asserted the boy, as he succeeded in getting a light. "Got too much use fur it. Keeps me peggin' away at chin music most all the time.—There, now I'm sorter comfortable," and Jolly Jim seated himself in an arm-chair, tilted it back, and soon was drawing away at his cigar with an air of great satisfaction. He evidently felt himself as big as a small mountain.

"You're fixed, are you?" asked the man, looking with grim humor at his self-satisfied companion. "Well, have you got your bag of news filled? Just let me have a tune from that chin-music." He sent a cloud of smoke from his pipe as he spoke, and settled himself easily in his chair.

"Been peepin' round Clark's," answered the boy. "Seen two queer roosters dig out from that shanty. I tried to foller 'em, 'cordin' to orders, but it turned out quite impossible."

"Impossible, you mean?"

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"All right, Jolly," laughed the man. "What was there impossible about it? You've got the use of your legs and your eyes yet—and your

tongue, too, for that matter. What was to hinder you following those men?"

"'Cause I ain't double-barreled," rejoined the boy, with an odd grimace. "'Cause I can't split myself up and send one leg toddlin' off with one half o' me, and t'other leg with t'other half; that's why."

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"Come, dry up on that now, or I'll make a rain-barrel convert of you."

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"And where was that?" asked the listener, in a very indifferent tone.

"It was a gallus-lookin' shanty, out of Fifth avenue, jist above Fifty-ninth street."

"Ha!" the pipe fell from the man's lips with a crash to the floor. He turned sharply upon the boy, with a look of sudden interest. "You are sure of that?"

"Surer than I am of havin' squab pigeons fur supper to-night," was the reply, and he puffed away at his stump of a cigar as if the excitement of his companion was of no importance whatever. He was a thorough young philosopher, and bound to take life placidly whatever happened.

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"Maybe you've hit a hole with no bottom to it, my lad, and maybe you've struck a bonanza. There's no telling what's in the wood till we bore in. Did you take the number of that house?"

"Not much!" with a sniff of contempt. "I don't know any more 'bout numbers nor an elephant knows 'bout gooseberries. Where I got my eddication they didn't take in no sich truck. I don't make no brag on my 'larnin', but I can tell you how many huckleberries they puts in a mince pie. And plenty of your school couldn't do that."

"How many do they put in?"

"None. Nary a huckleberry." And Jim jumped from his chair and scooted around the table, as if he expected to be knocked on the head for his smartness.

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"You're fixed, are you?" asked the man, looking with grim humor at his self-satisfied companion. "Well, have you got your bag of news filled? Just let me have a tune from that chin-music." He sent a cloud of smoke from his pipe as he spoke, and settled himself easily in his chair.

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"And where was that?" asked the listener, in a very indifferent tone.

"It was a gallus-lookin' shanty, out of Fifth avenue, jist above Fifty-ninth street."

"Ha!" the pipe fell from the man's lips with a crash to the floor. He turned sharply upon the boy, with a look of sudden interest. "You are sure of that?"

"Surer than I am of havin' squab pigeons fur supper to-night," was the reply, and he puffed away at his stump of a cigar as if the excitement of his companion was of no importance whatever. He was a thorough young philosopher, and bound to take life placidly whatever happened.

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"Not much!" with a sniff of contempt. "I don't know any more 'bout numbers nor an elephant knows 'bout gooseberries. Where I got my eddication they didn't take in no sich truck. I don't make no brag on my 'larnin', but I can tell you how many huckleberries they puts in a mince pie. And plenty of your school couldn't do that."

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"None. Nary a huckleberry." And Jim jumped from his chair and scooted around the table, as if he expected to be knocked on the head for his smartness.

But Mr. Keen only laughed.

"No matter. You spotted the house, I suppose?"

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"Sure?" asked the officer, excitedly.

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"I'm to twig them there swells," muttered the gamin spy. "And I'm to foller them. That's down fine; but it's jist the tiresomest job as I ever took on. Wonder how Mr. Keen 'd like takin' a fotograf of a fire-plug on his pantaloon? If they don't peg out soon, or some-thin' don't stir up to make things lively, I'll git. A feller don't want to grow into a burdock, and root hisself into a pavin' stone."

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Jolly Jim, The Detective Apprentice; OR, Harry Keen's Big "Lay."

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BLOODS," "WILD WILL," "BOB
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FIRE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. A BRISK YOUNG SPROUT.

THE room into which we desire to introduce our readers was not a very attractive apartment. Four bare, white-washed walls; an uncarpeted floor; a square table covered with papers, on which lay an empty pipe and some half-smoked cigars; and two or three plain arm-chairs; such were the room and its furniture. Tacked upon the wall were several photographs, of parties who looked as if they belonged to the rogues' gallery. In one corner of the room was a small iron safe, whose half open door showed a number of account books, and also a brace of handcuffs, a mask, and several other such questionable articles. It would have been difficult to decide at first sight, whether it was the home of a thief, or a thief-catcher.

Only a single person was present, a man of middle height, moderately stout, keen-eyed, firm-mouthed, and with a quick, alert way of moving, as of one who was not to be taken by surprise. His face was clean-shaven, and his hair cut short, possibly for facility in wearing disguises. Certainly some of the articles in the safe looked like false whiskers, and wigs of various shades.

"Confound it all. I'm half at outs with the job," he petulantly exclaimed. "It's like wading into strange water. When you put down your foot you never know whether it is going into a hole, or onto solid ground. I would give something to see blue sky ahead."

He picked up the pipe from the table, and deliberately filled it, in a sort of reflecting way, as if he was thinking of something else. That done he took a match from his pocket and impatiently drew it across the sole of his shoe.

"If it was only as easy to light it as it is this pipe. But hang it all—Eh?"

He stopped puffing at the pipe, and looked quietly around.

"S'pose you pass a feller a light, afore that there match goes out," came in a boy's voice from his elbow.

The person upon whom he looked was an odd one. It was a boy, well grown and of good figure, but dressed in a dilapidated garb, which looked as if it had been at least twice worn out before he fell heir to it. His face was as sharp and keen as that of a fox. He had evidently been well rubbed on the grindstone of life, and had cut his eye-teeth at a very early age. In his hand he held a cigar stump, which he had taken from the table.

"Reckon I'll take a puff with you, Mr. Keen," continued the impudent-faced gamin. "So gi'n us a light."

"Hallo, Jolly! It's you, is it? Puff away then, little pigeon; and take care you don't draw your chin through the back of your neck."

"Can't spare it," asserted the boy, as he succeeded in getting a light. "Got too much use fur it. Keeps me peggin' away at chin music most all the time.—There, now I'm sorter comf'ble," and Jolly Jim seated himself in an arm-chair, tilted it back, and soon was drawing away at his cigar with an air of great satisfaction. He evidently felt himself as big as a small mountain.

"You're fixed, are you?" asked the man, looking with grim humor at his self-satisfied companion. "Well, have you got your bag of news filled? Just let me have a tune from that chin-music." He sent a cloud of smoke from his pipe as he spoke, and settled himself easily in his chair.

"Been peepin' round Clark's," answered the boy. "Seen two queer roosters dig out from that shanty. I tried to foller 'em, 'cordin' to orders, but it turned out quite impossible."

"Impossible, you mean?"

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"All right, Jolly," laughed the man. "What was there impossible about it? You've got the use of your legs and your eyes yet—and your

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He stopped and looked around him with more interest. Something attractive had caught his eye. It was the form of a boy who was mov-

ing carelessly along on the other side of the street, busily engaged, as it seemed, in investigating the shop windows.

"If it ain't Tim Tripper I'm a cat-fish!" ejaculated Jolly, clapping his knee with satisfaction. "Salted me with a rotten cabbage, that coon did. Guess he didn't know what sort of a gum tree he was climbin'. Bet a big pun-kin I pay him out."

He slipped from his perch, and scooped up a handful of sticky and loud-smelling mud from the gutter. Taking deliberate aim at the unconscious boy, who was just then admiring a cigar shop figure, Jim called out his name.

The lad turned, at the same moment that the young Arab launched his missile with a sure aim. It was a long distance, but Jim was a prime shot, and the mud took the boy square on the point of the nose, and flattened out over his face like a new kind of mask.

An extraordinary figure he cut, with his face completely plastered with the odorous mixture, and eyes, mouth and chin buried out of sight. The young scamps across the street burst into a roar of laughter as his victim commenced spluttering, scooping and swearing, with as full a sample of oaths as one often hears.

"That's cabbage for you!" roared Jim. "I told you I'd fit you out in sourcrot; but you kin take that fur small change. S'pose you calkerlated that Jim Jumper didn't pay back, but I ain't s'pended payment yit. Nary time."

By this time the lad had got the mud out of his eyes sufficiently to get them open and see his tormentor, who was still laughing violently at the joke, but Tim evidently did not see the fun in it, for he ran across the street, clinching his fists in a warlike fashion.

"I'll pay you out, blow me if I don't!" he savagely yelled.

"Come on, little hoss!" cried Jim, contemptuously. "That's jist my measure. I said I was goin' to curry you down, so you kin pitch in quick as blazes."

Tim was the larger boy, being taller and stouter than Jim, but he seemed heavy, while Jolly was light and quick as spring-steel. It was evidently the intention of the assailant to come to a grapple, as he rushed forward madly, with both arms extended.

But it takes two to make a bargain, and he got a left-hander on the temple that made the mud fly, while the alert gamin sprang lightly aside.

"Square yerself, hoss-fly!" he cried. "We ain't doin' no rough-and-tumble. Square yerself, afore I play the roll-call on yer nose."

Tap after tap on Tim's countenance followed this challenge. But the furious and half-blinded boy knew that he was no match for Jolly in a stand-off fist-fight, and he pushed wildly in, despite the smarting blows which he received.

His bull-dog persistence told. In a minute he had grappled with his assailant, and the fight was changed from a fist battle to a wrestle.

"Darn yer picter, I've got you now!" yelled Tim, through his set teeth. "Ill give you gutter mud, blest if I don't!"

"You will, hey, you cross-eyed bull-frog? Pile in then! Do yer prettiest, for you ain't got hold of no bag of taters."

It was a struggle between strength and agility. The boys twisted and squirmed about the street, each doing his utmost to fling the other. Tim had no science, but he made up for it in strength, and bore Jolly back till he almost touched the ground. But with an agile spring the latter broke loose, caught Tim by a new hold, and the struggle was renewed on even terms.

The elder boy had been trained in a bad school, for he swore like a trooper all through the fight. But Jolly kept silent, with his teeth set, and all his senses on the alert. Caution and keenness always tell in the end. There came a quick feint, a sharp trip, a sudden surge, and down went Tim like a log, with his head in the muddy gutter, and Jim Jumper on top.

"You big-headed lubber! I told you I'd pay you out for that cabbage!" cried the victor, as he shoved his antagonist's head into the mud. "It's my turn now."

"Oh laws! Oh cracky! Let me up! Let me up!" yelled Tim, who was getting decidedly the worst of it.

"So you kin fling rotten cabbages ag'in, hey?"

A savage oath came from Tim in reply, but it was cut short by a handful of mud, which Jim deftly landed in his mouth.

"That's fer cussin'," he explained. "No feller as thinks anything of hisself cusses, and I'm goin' to break you of it."

"Blast yer eyes, let me up!" yelled Tim fiercely.

"Not much; till you axes in a more perlite way."

Two men who had just left Clark's saloon were looking on and laughing at the fighting boys, as if they highly enjoyed it. One of them now interfered.

"Let up, little chap. Give him a square chance."

"You go to thunder! This is my fight and I fights to whip," cried Jim, impudently.

"Why, you blarsted young rat! Let up, I say, or I'll shake you like a tarrier with a rat!"

Jolly had by this time twisted around, and cast a look up at the speaker. It was a tall, slim, side-whiskered man dressed in sporting taste, and wearing a white hat, half covered with black crape.

The boy recognized him in an instant. It was the man he was on the watch for! Beside him was his companion, a shorter, stouter person dressed in much the same fashion.

"Lawsee, this is rich," thought Jim. "They'll twig me, and I won't be wuth shucks fur a scout arter that. What's goin' to be did?"

A thought came to him. His hands were well covered with mud, and in an instant he had plastered his own countenance with a black mask. His mother would not have known him.

Meanwhile Tim was struggling and roaring for release.

"Got enough?" demanded Jolly.

"Yes! Let me up," he spluttered through his mouthful of mud.

"All right, my cove. Don't try rotten cabbage on this hoss ag'in. That's all."

A quick backward spring and Jim was on his feet, leaving his heavier victim to follow at his leisure. The two sports burst into a roar of laughter on seeing the boy's well-plastered face.

"Lord, but this is a rum go! Look at the little monkey grinning! Did you ever see such a jolly ugly little brat?"

"Dry up, smarty!" cried Jolly, with an angry jerk. "Best put that tongue of yours up the spout, and take out one as ain't got so much sass in it."

He turned and ran away, as if fearful of the consequences of this speech. But he had another object in view. He did not want to be known by these men, and it was not safe to kept up the conversation.

Jim squatted down in a corner half a block off, and commenced, as well as he could without water, to relieve his face of its mask. He kept a keen eye on the two men, who still remained in the same place, and were laughing at the uncouth aspect of Tim Tripper as he slowly arose from his hard bed.

He was, indeed, an object to behold. He had suffered no serious bodily injury, but he looked as if the services of a pump would be very desirable, and smelt as if a bath in cologne water would not be amiss.

The two sports continued to laugh as they walked away. It was all fun to them. They had no sympathy to waste on the unlucky fighter, though they had the true English instinct for fair play.

"Weren't they jolly pictures?" said the tall one, with a laugh. "These young Yankees are regular little mud-rats. That little one, though, was an impudent young sprout."

"I'd like to have rattled his saucy teeth," rejoined the other. "Somehow I believe they're born to impudence."

"It's the last you'll see of him anyhow. These boys are like so many buzzing flies. By the time you're ready to slap at one there's another in his place."

"Dunce take the boy!" returned the other, dolefully slapping his pocket. "I've had a bad day, and I can't help feeling a bit cross."

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The lad turned, at the same moment that the young Arab launched his missile with a sure aim. It was a long distance, but Jim was a prime shot, and the mud took the boy square on the point of the nose, and flattened out over his face like a new kind of mask.

An extraordinary figure he cut, with his face completely plastered with the odorous mixture, and eyes, mouth and chin buried out of sight. The young scamps across the street burst into a roar of laughter as his victim commenced spluttering, scooping and swearing, with as full a sample of oaths as one often hears.

"That's cabbage for you!" roared Jim. "I told you I'd fit you out in sourcrot; but you kin take that fur small change. S'pose you calkerlated that Jim Jumper didn't pay back, but I ain't s'pended payment yit. Nary time."

By this time the lad had got the mud out of his eyes sufficiently to get them open and see his tormentor, who was still laughing violently at the joke, but Tim evidently did not see the fun in it, for he ran across the street, clinching his fists in a warlike fashion.

"I'll pay you out, blow me if I don't!" he savagely yelled.

"Come on, little boss!" cried Jim, contemptuously. "That's jist my measure. I said I was goin' to curry you down, so you kin pitch in quick as blazes."

Tim was the larger boy, being taller and stouter than Jim, but he seemed heavy, while Jolly was light and quick as spring-steel. It was evidently the intention of the assailant to come to a grapple, as he rushed forward madly, with both arms extended.

But it takes two to make a bargain, and he got a left-hander on the temple that made the mud fly, while the alert gamin sprang lightly aside.

"Square yerself, hoss-fly!" he cried. "We ain't doin' no rough-and-tumble. Square yerself, afore I play the roll-call on yer nose."

Tap after tap on Tim's countenance followed this challenge. But the furious and half-blinded boy knew that he was no match for Jolly in a stand-off fist-fight, and he pushed wildly in, despite the smarting blows which he received.

His bull-dog persistence told. In a minute he had grappled with his assailant, and the fight was changed from a fist battle to a wrestle.

"Darn yer picter, I've got you now!" yelled Tim, through his set teeth. "I'll give you gutter mud, blest if I don't!"

"You will, hey, you cross-eyed bull-frog? Pile in then! Do yer prettiest, for you ain't got hold of no bag of taters."

It was a struggle between strength and agility. The boys twisted and squirmed about the street, each doing his utmost to fling the other. Tim had no science, but he made up for it in strength, and bore Jolly back till he almost touched the ground. But with an agile spring the latter broke loose, caught Tim by a new hold, and the struggle was renewed on even terms.

The elder boy had been trained in a bad school, for he swore like a trooper all through the fight. But Jolly kept silent, with his teeth set, and all his senses on the alert. Caution and keenness always tell in the end. There came a quick feint, a sharp trip, a sudden surge, and down went Tim like a log, with his head in the muddy gutter, and Jim Jumper on top.

"You big-headed lubber! I told you I'd pay you out for that cabbage!" cried the victor, as he shoved his antagonist's head into the mud. "It's my turn now."

"Oh laws! Oh cracky! Let me up! Let me up!" yelled Tim, who was getting decidedly the worst of it.

"So you kin fling rotten cabbages ag'in, hey?"

A savage oath came from Tim in reply, but it was cut short by a handful of mud, which Jim deftly landed in his mouth.

"That's fer cussin'," he explained. "No feller as thinks anything of hisself cusses, and I'm goin' to break you of it."

"Blast yer eyes, let me up!" yelled Tim fiercely.

"Not much; till you axes in a more perlite way."

Two men who had just left Clark's saloon were looking on and laughing at the fighting boys, as if they highly enjoyed it. One of them now interfered.

"Let up, little chap. Give him a square chance."

"You go to thunder! This is my fight and I fights to whip," cried Jim, impudently.

"Why, you blarsted young rat! Let up, I say, or I'll shake you like a tarrier with a rat!"

Jolly had by this time twisted around, and cast a look up at the speaker. It was a tall, slim, side-whiskered man dressed in sporting taste, and wearing a white hat, half covered with black crape.

The boy recognized him in an instant. It was the man he was on the watch for! Beside him was his companion, a shorter, stouter person dressed in much the same fashion.

"Lawsee, this is rich," thought Jim. "They'll twig me, and I won't be wuth shucks fur a scout arter that. What's goin' to be did?"

A thought came to him. His hands were well covered with mud, and in an instant he had plastered his own countenance with a black mask. His mother would not have known him.

Meanwhile Tim was struggling and roaring for release.

"Got enough?" demanded Jolly.

"Yes! Let me up," he spluttered through his mouthful of mud.

"All right, my cove. Don't try rotten cabbage on this hoss ag'in. That's all."

A quick backward spring and Jim was on his feet, leaving his heavier victim to follow at his leisure. The two sports burst into a roar of laughter on seeing the boy's well-plastered face.

"Lord, but this is a rum go! Look at the little monkey grinning! Did you ever see such a jolly ugly little brat?"

"Dry up, smarty!" cried Jolly, with an angry jerk. "Best put that tongue of yours up the spout, and take out one as ain't got so much sass in it."

He turned and ran away, as if fearful of the consequences of this speech. But he had another object in view. He did not want to be known by these men, and it was not safe to kept up the conversation.

Jim squatted down in a corner half a block off, and commenced, as well as he could without water, to relieve his face of its mask. He kept a keen eye on the two men, who still remained in the same place, and were laughing at the uncouth aspect of Tim Tripper as he slowly arose from his hard bed.

He was, indeed, an object to behold. He had suffered no serious bodily injury, but he looked as if the services of a pump would be very desirable, and smelt as if a bath in cologne water would not be amiss.

The two sports continued to laugh as they walked away. It was all fun to them. They had no sympathy to waste on the unlucky fighter, though they had the true English instinct for fair play.

"Weren't they jolly pictures?" said the tall one, with a laugh. "These young Yankees are regular little mud-rats. That little one, though, was an impudent young sprout."

"I'd like to have rattled his saucy teeth," rejoined the other. "Somehow I believe they're born to impudence."

"It's the last you'll see of him anyhow. These boys are like so many buzzing flies. By the time you're ready to slap at one there's another in his place."

"Dunce take the boy!" returned the other, dolefully slapping his pocket. "I've had a bad day, and I can't help feeling a bit cross."

As to not seeing anything more of the Arab, they might be a little mistaken. At any rate Jim was bound to see something more of them. He was already on their track, at a good distance behind, but with his keen eyes following their every movement. He had got the thick of the mud from his face and hands, and continued to rub it off, as it dried in the fresh air.

Despite his efforts, however, the boy made a questionable figure, as he continued his pursuit, and more than one passer-by turned to laugh at him.

"What's the matter, Jolly?" asked one of these. "Been planting yourself, and waiting for something to sprout, eh?"

"Been takin' a mud bath," answered Jim, quickly. "It's good for the liver. Best try it on yerself. Look as if you want it."

He continued his shadowing, through street after street, keeping at a good distance behind

the two sports. Finally they stopped and entered a house on a narrow by-street. It seemed a sort of small ale-house, to judge by its exterior, though there were no signs to indicate the business pursued within.

"Don't quite like the looks of that shanty," remarked the young sleuth, as he scanned it critically. "Looks as if it had one paw out fur show, and was holdin' three back fur grab. Guess I'll go hunt a pump, or somewhere I kin git a wash up. Then I'll sail back and go in fur snacks."

A half hour afterward he returned to the front of the ale-house, presenting quite a different aspect.

His face was now clean as a new pin, and had been rubbed until it shone. The mud had been thoroughly removed from his clothes, and he displayed an unusually neat aspect.

"Guess I'll do it," he declared, looking down at himself approvingly. "Don't know what Mr. Keen 'd say, but I allers believe in goin' the whole circus or none."

He walked boldly into the house before him. The swinging door admitted him into a small room, with sanded floor, around which were several small tables. Only one of these was occupied by two men with mugs of ale before them. Behind the bar stood the stout, red-faced proprietor.

"Well, little blue jacket, what can I do for you?" he asked.

"A mug of yer best brew. And lively!" answered the visitor, with a very important air. "I've got to be on 'change in an hour. So look alive."

CHAPTER III.

LAYING OUT WORK.

IN a private apartment of the house into which Jolly Jim had introduced himself were seated the two men of whom he was in search, together with a dubious-looking third party.

We have already sufficiently described these two men, with their sporting rig, and their airy manner. Their companion was a very different individual. He was a decided rough in appearance, uncombed, half-shaved, and with the look of one who had spent half his life in punishing whisky. He was dressed in a well-worn suit of corduroy, his pantaloons being stuffed into his boot-legs, in waterman fashion.

These three worthies had grouped themselves around a table, on which stood a pitcher of ale, and glasses to match. Flanking these were a plate of sandwiches and a jar of mustard.

"This is what I call neat," averred the tall sport, as he munched a sandwich. "There's no use talking, but mustard and meat go together just like salt and potatoes."

"Or like arm-chairs and ale," answered his companion, taking a deep draught from the glass before him.

"Belay all that slack!" broke in the third, in a hoarse tone. "I met you coves here fur business, so jiss take a reef in yer talkin' canvas, and come down to dots. What's in the wind? That's the pint to be settled."

"They're hunting us like beagles," replied the tall individual. "Your New York detectives have got more brains than I counted on. It's a blasted cute fellow has hold of this job."

"Harry Keen!" answered the rough, with an oath. "You go high on him. He's wide awake as gunpowder. You ain't let that chap spot you, Adam? If he has, we best fling up the glove."

"We got to move our baggage," declared Adam, with a knowing wink. "Ain't that so, Jerry?"

"That's how I take it," assented the second sport. "The scent is getting warm. Can't say if the hounds are at fault or not; but they're too near the fox's cover for comfort."

"Blow yer eyes! Some on ye has sailed too close to the shore," ejaculated the rough. "I call it a neat trap where the baggage is now. And movin's risky. Best keep yer sheets taut till ye can see clear sailin' ag'in."

"There was a cove round the cover this morning who looked like a spot," answered Jerry. "I played innocent, and planked him a fly question, but he didn't bite. He's an old chub, sartain. He's on some lay, but I couldn't weed him out."

"Jiss take Bill Bates's notion, and let little lovely alone," growled the rough. "Ye can't move live freight under a spotter. It's too risky."

"See here, Bill," broke in Adam. "We haven't fingered the needful yet, for that job. We've got to freeze to the baggage till he blinks down."

"Why the blazes don't you bleed him then?"

queried Bill, striking the table with his clinched fist. "Shoot me if I believe in lettin' a chap make a devil's monkey of me."

"I tried him yesterday, but he wouldn't bleed," answered Adam. "Not a red till the job's safe, he swears."

"That comes of makin' a donkey's bargain," returned Bill, savagely. "Ye're too derved soft. Let me at him. I'll screw it onter him, or somethin' 'll bu'st."

"Try it on then, as soon as you want. But I can tell you this: he's no baby. You never saw such a stiff one. Why, I threatened to turn the game loose, and he only curled his lip at me, and told me to slide on. Bluster won't pay in that quarter."

"By the Lord, I'll crack his crib then!" Bill fiercely rejoined. "He daren't kick, 'cause we kin blow on him."

"That's business," decided Adam, with a mysterious gesture. "I've a notion there's good pay dirt round that shanty. But blow low, Bill; there might be ears in hearing."

"I'll chop 'em off if there are. Burn me if I don't!"

And Blowing Bill Bates sprang up and moved toward the door on the look-out for listeners.

At the same moment there came a loud noise from the passage outside the door. It was a scuffling sound, mingled with a loud uproar in youthful voices, as if some boys were engaged in a fight. On the door being thrown open a brace of half-grown boys appeared, struggling, as it seemed, for a bootblack's apparatus.

"You stole my box, and if you don't fork it over I'll bu'st your snoot!" yelled one.

"No yer won't," cried the boy that held the box. "Tain't in yer wool. Slide now, 'fore I swipe the box round yer ears."

It was the voice of Jim Jumper.

"What's bu'sted loose yere away?" demanded Bill. "Git out, ye spring-roosters, 'fore I kick the pair o' ye down the hatches!"

This was spoken savagely enough, but Jolly didn't seem to be much scared, though his antagonist drew timidly back.

"A feller talkin' hog Latin with sich a underpinnin' as that!" exclaimed Jim, contemptuously, as he pointed to Bill's soiled boots. "Stand level there and let me gi'n you a shine! Blow is no 'count, when it comes outer dirty boot-leather."

Bill gave an astounded look at the bold boy. Then a grim laugh came from his ugly mouth. He put his foot on the box.

"Ye'r a gritty little mud rat!" he declared, approvingly. "Peg away then. Let's see if you've got as much elbow grease as you've got pepper in yer tongue. If you don't make them boots shine from toes to tops, I won't bleed a red cent."

"I ain't goin' to black no whole jackass's hide," returned Jim, saucily. "I'll give you the toe and heel fling, and that's all the blackin' we invest fer a dime. Plank down handsome and I'll polish you up from yer toes to yer nose."

While Jolly is engaged in his job, and the other boy angrily waiting, we must go back and relate the cause of their sudden appearance.

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"Come, stir yer stumps now! I'm as dry as a tea-kettle sputter arter the water's all b'iled out. Fork out yer Linnon Partick'ler. I don't drink no mean swash."

"Why, blarst your eyes! you dirty, impudent young gutter-snipe!" cried the angry landlord. "Git out of this instanter, or I'll kick you into the middle of next week."

"Wonder if he knows who he's talkin' to?" queried Jolly Jim, with well acted astonishment, of the other inmates of the room. "Guess he ain't never seen Vanderbilt afore, the way he blows."

"Vanderbilt?"

"Second cousin. That ain't fur off. S'pose I ain't good fur a half-dime? Come, spike out now! Draw a good bead, and I'll blow you up to all the brokers on Wall street."

The landlord broke into a laugh. He evidently thought he had caught an original. Without another word he filled a pewter mug with foaming ale and set it before the gamin.

"Here you are, little chick. Don't float out your brains now. It's a bit too strong for a chap o' your inches."

"Got a nickel-plated throat, and a cast-iron

head," assured the boy. "Guess you won't easy upset a fuss-class apple-cart."

The youthful drinker, however, seemed in no hurry to finish his ale. He sipped at it gingerly, and with more than one concealed wry face. Evidently he was not used to tippling, and did not take kindly to London Particular.

Other customers entered and left the saloon, all of whom were closely noted by the watchful spy. Among them was the roughly-dressed fellow whom we have been introduced to by the name of Bill Bates—"Blower Bill," as he was called by his mates.

He stalked loudly up to the bar, and addressed the landlord in a familiar tone. After a few minutes' general conversation their voices sunk, and a few words passed between them in a low tone.

Jolly's ears were strained to hear, and he made out the words:

"Second room back. Been waiting an hour."

"Then I'll up helm, and sheer inter harbor," remarked Bill, and he walked back through the room, and passed into the house by a rear door. There was little in this, but it attracted Jim's close attention. Were the men he had pursued the ones who were waiting for this rough customer? It certainly looked like it, and the low tones of the questioner were suspicious. Jim grew eager to penetrate further into the mysteries of that mansion.

He sat seeking to devise some plan, while the landlord was drawing a pitcher of ale and conveying it into the house. But think as he would, no satisfactory suggestion came to him.

He emptied two-thirds of his mug into the spittoon while the landlord's back was turned. Evidently he was not yet broken in to barley brew.

"What's the plunder?" he asked, bustling up to the bar with an important air.

"Half a dime to common folks," was the reply. "But 'tain't every day that I bag a railroad boss, so I guess I'll assess you a dime."

The two men in the back of the room laughed as Jim went into his pocket for the change.

"Yer don't s'pose I kear a fig?" he queried. "Why I could smother you in gold dollars if I let out. Yere's yer provender—Hillo! by Jiminy, if I ain't left my purse in my other pocket. I ain't got nothin' here better nor a brass button."

"What's that?" cried the landlord, angrily. "Are you trying to dish me, you dirty vagabond?"

"Hold yer hosses!" exclaimed the boy. "I ain't no sharp, you bet. I'll settle that claim in a cat's jump."

He ran quickly from the room ere the angry landlord could get outside his bar. But ere the latter had done delivering his opinion of boys in general, Jim was back, swinging on his arm a bootblack's box.

"Yere ye are!" he shouted. "I ain't got no funds with me, but I'll guv yer boots a ten-cent swipe and call it square. Plug 'em on here."

Without waiting for yes or no the boy took possession of the landlord's right foot, and was rubbing away for dear life ere the latter had time to move.

"Reckon ye didn't git it 'fore you wanted it. Why, them there boots is spilin' fur a polish."

The landlord laughed. Jim's assurance was a little too much for him.

"Don't try this game on too often, my boy," he warned. "You might get kicks instead of coppers."

"I knowed you was a good-natured hoss," answered Jim, as he picked up his box. "Maybe these gents 'd like a shine-up too?"

"Git out!" cried one of the two men, as Jolly approached them.

"All right. If you don't kear, I don't. Can't I pick up some customers in the house, Mr. Landlord? Saw a feller go in with hoss-hide boots. Reckon I'll try."

Without waiting for a reply, Jolly shot back through the rear door. The landlord called angrily after him to come back, but the boy paid no attention.

"Here, you little reprobate!"

He ran to the door, but Jolly had already disappeared.

The landlord was about to follow, but he looked around at his customers and seemingly changed his mind. They were not the kind it was safe to leave in company with a cash-box.

"The young rascal! If he disturbs Bill Bates, he'll get paid out, that's some comfort," growled the landlord.

What Jolly was doing for the next five or ten minutes did not appear. He did not return, and no sound came from the deeper regions of the house.

At the end of that interval a second boy ran angrily into the tap-room.

"Where's the rat that stole my box?" he exclaimed. "Some of the boys told me he come in here. Bet you I pay him out if I catch him. Where's he slid?"

"You'll find him back in the house," said the landlord, mischievously. "Lather him well, boy. He wants it."

"Bet I do," answered the boy, darting back through the open door to which he was directed.

As to what followed we have some knowledge, from the time the new-comer found Jolly with his ear to a key-hole until the latter captured the job of polishing Bill Bates's boots.

CHAPTER IV.

JOLLY ON A SCOUT.

THE Fifth avenue mansion to which Jolly had conducted Mr. Keen was a handsome and stylish edifice, showy outside and richly furnished within. In a sort of library apartment within this mansion sat two men. One of these was the detective, Harry Keen. The other was a slenderly-built, handsome, graceful young man, dressed tastefully and expensively. He half-sat, half-reclined in a velvet-covered arm-chair, and bore the appearance of an indolent devotee of fashion. But a good judge of character would have said that there was more energy in his face than showed itself in his listless manner.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Keen," he remarked, in a subdued tone. "I hope you bring me some cheerful news."

The officer fixed his sharp eyes on the speaker with an odd expression.

"There is nothing," he replied. "I cannot see my way through the job. I am afraid it is going to master me, Mr. Landers. I wish you would drop me overboard and hand it over to some sharper chap than me."

"What you can't do none can do," answered Mr. Landers, in the same subdued tone. "Keep on, Mr. Keen. Do your best. Only do your best. I pray, I pray sincerely that you may be successful."

"I hope I will," the officer bluntly answered. "But it takes sharp eyes to see through a mill-stone. The bounds are old hands, and have covered up their tracks completely."

"Ah! my poor, poor Lucile!" and the young man put his hand to his eyes, with great show of feeling. "It almost breaks my heart to think of it! Where can she be? What can have become of her? You cannot imagine how terribly I have felt her loss."

"I suppose so. That's only natural," answered the officer, in the same blunt way. "You can trust me, if I get my hands on the ruffians, to keep hold of them. But we've tracked every fellow now that is in that line, and spotted all their hiding-places. It's my opinion, Mr. Landers, that there's no low ruffian in this. It's a bit of your fine gentleman's work."

Mr. Landers raised himself impulsively, and looked earnestly at the speaker.

"You don't really think that?"

"Have you any rival? Any candidate for this fair lady's favor?"

The young gentleman did not answer immediately, but seemed lost in deep thought, while a look of disquiet passed over his face. Mr. Keen kept his eyes fixed upon him.

"That's a new suggestion, sir," answered the disturbed gentleman. "I must crave time to think it over. You have raised suspicions in my mind. What they are I will not say now; but I begin to see light ahead."

"I hope it will prove daylight, then," answered the officer, as he rose and took his hat. "I've had enough of moonlight. Good day, Mr. Landers. You can trust me to do my best."

"Good-day, Mr. Keen, good-day; and good fortune attend you."

There was a dubious look on the detective's face, as he made his way into the street. He took off his hat, and rubbed his head in a reflective fashion.

"I have my doubts," he said. "Landers's grief is too confoundedly neat. It is cut to fit, like a stylish coat. Why, hang it! he takes his trouble like a luxury, instead of tearing his hair out, as a true lover would. I am doubtful of your oily tongue, Mr. Will Landers."

He appeared lost in deep thought as he made his way slowly through the streets. He was interrupted in an unfrequented locality by a sharp tug at his coat. He turned, and saw the dilapidated attire and wide-awake face of Jolly Jim.

"Scuse my jerkin," remarked the latter.

guered Bill, striking the table with his clinched fist. "Shoot me if I believe in lettin' a chap make a devil's monkey of me."

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The young gentleman did not answer immediately, but seemed lost in deep thought, while a look of disquiet passed over his face. Mr. Keen kept his eyes fixed upon him.

"That's a new suggestion, sir," answered the disturbed gentleman. "I must crave time to think it over. You have raised suspicions in my mind. What they are I will not say now; but I begin to see light ahead."

"I hope it will prove daylight, then," answered the officer, as he rose and took his hat. "I've had enough of moonlight. Good day, Mr. Landers. You can trust me to do my best."

"Good-day, Mr. Keen, good-day; and good fortune attend you."

There was a dubious look on the detective's face, as he made his way into the street. He took off his hat, and rubbed his head in a reflective fashion.

"I have my doubts," he said. "Landers's grief is too confoundedly neat. It is cut to fit, like a stylish coat. Why, hang it! he takes his trouble like a luxury, instead of tearing his hair out, as a true lover would. I am doubtful of your oily tongue, Mr. Will Landers."

He appeared lost in deep thought as he made his way slowly through the streets. He was interrupted in an unfrequented locality by a sharp tug at his coat. He turned, and saw the dilapidated attire and wide-awake face of Jolly Jim.

"Scuse my jerkin," remarked the latter.

"I hollered at you, but I mought as well have talked French to a cigar Pompey. Didn't know you was gone deaf."

"I was studying something out," rejoined Mr. Keen. "What's up, Jolly Jim? Anything in the wind?"

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"Sartin as duck-shootin'."

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"I dunno what; but he looks as if he means business."

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In this there was no difficulty. The man pursued was not forty paces distant, and was walking steadily onward, as if utterly heedless of pursuit.

The job of following him was too easy for Jolly to take any credit in it. He would have felt better satisfied if he had been obliged to dodge and skulk a little. His taste did not incline to such plain sailing.

Yet, if it was an easy pursuit, it promised to be a long one. The ruffian continued his course for block after block, turning and winding from street to street, and pushing his way through the crowds he met with a rough energy that made every timid person give way.

He was now well down in the East River side of the city, and he became more on the alert as he pushed his way into certain disreputable streets in that quarter.

But the boy was not to be caught napping. Now the man cast hasty glances behind him. Now he stopped, his hand resting easily on a lamp-post, and gave a long, searching look back.

But Jolly Jim was as alert as the musketo to which he had compared himself. Bill Bates failed to perceive anything suspicious. The boy was out of sight, and all the people visible seemed actively engaged in their own business.

"Dern if I b'lieve a word of it," muttered that worthy to himself. "That dandy Snip, Adam, is allers seein' and smellin' spotters. Why, it's as innercent 'round here as a baby's cradle. S'pect he see'd a pork butcher lookin' fur a customer, or summat like. It's as smooth here as the Bay o' Biscay in a calm."

He walked on, with an angry look, as if vexed at his comrade's overcaution. In a moment more he had turned a corner near him. The next minute Jolly Jim had reached the same spot, and was gazing cautiously around the edge of the corner house.

The street before him was narrow, quiet and retired. Very few passers were upon it, and Bill Bates had paused before a house not far away from the corner. He cast another suspicious look behind him, and then walked up to the door of this edifice.

The scout's quick eyes saw that he did not ring for admittance, but took a key from his pocket, and let himself into the house like an inmate.

"Looks like a mighty 'spectable neighborhood," said Jolly, scratching his head. "Roughs like Bill Bates don't live in houses like that. If I am only a boy I kin git that much through my wool. Ther's a screw locse. Blow me, if there ain't a baker's dozen o' screws loose hereaway! Guess I'll have to set up fur screw-driver, and ram 'em in. I's seen thin things, but Bill Bates goin' into that there mansion is a stripe too thin. It's some sort o' fence's head-quarters, or else I'm a donkey without no brains. I'll bet a red cow and a basket of 'taters that it's here that baggage is salted away. I'm a-goin' through that shanty, or I'm goin' to bust a tryin'. That's me."

It was one thing to form a resolution of that kind. It was another thing to carry it out. He retired to the other side of the street, and carefully observed the house before him.

It had been at one time, a mansion of some pretensions, but looked now much the worse for wear, as if it had fallen into plebeian hands. The whole street, in fact, had gone down in tone. This present house stood, in a manner, by itself. A narrow alley on each side separated it from the adjoining houses. There was an opening through the gate that led into one of these alleys, and the boy was able to look back into a yard of some extent. It had evidently at one time been laid out in grass and flower beds, but now presented a very neglected aspect.

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He tried the gate, but it was locked. With a gesture of impatience he gave a hearty pull to the gate bell.

"Always keep me waiting here! Why can't they leave the gate open? I've got a dozen lots to deliver along the street."

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The grocer looked sharply at the boy and then into the alley to see if any one was coming.

"Thundering slow folks here. Well, hand it in, boy. Much obliged. Will give you a big apple the next time I see you."

He handed Jim the basket and ran hastily to his wagon. Extracting another package he was off like an arrow to a house further down the block.

"Dunno how it'll work," muttered Jim; "but ther's nothin' like tryin'."

He now perceived a fresh-faced servant girl, who came very leisurely along the alley.

"Who's there?" she cried, in a tone of vexation.

"Groceries and perwisions," answered Jim, promptly.

"They ought to have been here at laste an hour ago! Fetch 'em in. It's always late you are."

"They'll last the longer," answered Jim, impudently. "If I'd brung 'em yesterday they'd all been eat up now."

"Come ahead wid you. Nobody axed you to bring them yesterday."

She led the way back and Jim followed, with his basket on his arm and his tongue in his cheek.

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His face expressed deep admiration, and he looked at the girl as if he fancied her a household fairy.

"Hold your whist, you little rogue," she replied, though with a pleased face. "Is it like a pig-pen you'd be wantin' me to l'ave it?"

"S'pose I don't know nothin' 'bout kitchens?" answered the boy, sturdily. "I's seen all sorts on 'em. Ther's all kinds, from chicken roosts to swill tubs. It's good fur sore eyes to see a neat, shiny, scrubbed and wiped up cook's comfort of a place like this."

"Away wid your blarney, or I'll hit you wid the rollin'-pin!" cried the delighted girl.

"I like to see you bustlin' about and makin' the things howl," answered Jim, coolly helping himself to a seat, and drawing his legs under him like a Turk. "Guess I'll hang round and pick up a p'int or two 'bout cookin'."

"Listen till the little rascal!" rejoined the girl. "Just hark till him!"

At this moment the grocer made his advent into the kitchen, as smartly as if he had been shot from a cannon.

"You young villain, why didn't you bring back the basket?" he ejaculated. "I might as well have carried it in myself."

"Guess I didn't say you mightn't," answered the impudent boy. "S'pected to fotch it back, but got talkin' with this good-lookin' young lady, and clean furgot the whole bizness. There it is. Ain't no 'jections to your takin' it."

"Why, you rascally ragamuffin! Do you want me to burst your head in for your impudence?"

"Don't b'lieve you kin do it, little peas and parsnips," replied Jolly, saucily. "You'd find me a wuss weight to lift than you ever did the sand to mix with your sugar."

At this provocation the young man made a hasty movement toward the impertinent boy. But he was checked by the girl, who stepped hastily between.

"Away wid you!" she cried. "I won't have no scrimmages about my kitchen. The lad's a dacent lad, and it's yerself that pervoked him. Jist take your basket, and be off wid ye, afore ye get my temper up."

"I'll burst the young rat's snout, if ye gives me any impudence," answered the angry grocer.

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It was one thing to form a resolution of that kind. It was another thing to carry it out. He retired to the other side of the street, and carefully observed the house before him.

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While he was thus cogitating a grocer's wagon drove rattling up and stopped in front of the house. The occupant, a brisk, quick-motioned young fellow, sprung lightly out and ran up to the gate, basket in hand.

He tried the gate, but it was locked. With a gesture of impatience he gave a hearty pull to the gate bell.

"Always keep me waiting here! Why can't they leave the gate open? I've got a dozen lots to deliver along the street."

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The grocer looked sharply at the boy and then into the alley to see if any one was coming.

"Thundering slow folks here. Well, hand it in, boy. Much obliged. Will give you a big apple the next time I see you."

He handed Jim the basket and ran hastily to his wagon. Extracting another package he was off like an arrow to a house further down the block.

"Dunno how it'll work," muttered Jim; "but ther's nothin' like tryin'."

He now perceived a fresh-faced servant girl, who came very leisurely along the alley.

"Who's there?" she cried, in a tone of vexation.

"Groceries and perwisions," answered Jim, promptly.

"They ought to have been here at laste an hour ago! Fetch 'em in. It's always late you are."

"They'll last the longer," answered Jim, impudently. "If I'd brung 'em yesterday they'd all been eat up now."

"Come ahead wid you. Nobody axed you to bring them yesterday."

She led the way back and Jim followed, with his basket on his arm and his tongue in his cheek.

CHAPTER V.

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"KINDER cute 'bout here," said Jim, looking around the ample kitchen into which he had been introduced. "And as neat as a new jack-knife. Must keep you awful busy to git things up to sich a shine."

His face expressed deep admiration, and he looked at the girl as if he fancied her a household fairy.

"Hold your whist, you little rogue," she replied, though with a pleased face. "Is it like a pig-pen you'd be wantin' me to l'ave it?"

"S'pose I don't know nothin' 'bout kitchens?" answered the boy, sturdily. "I's seen all sorts on 'em. Ther's all kinds, from chicken roosts to swill tubs. It's good fur sore eyes to see a neat, shiny, scrubbed and wiped up cook's comfort of a place like this."

"Away wid your blarney, or I'll hit you wid the rollin'-pin!" cried the delighted girl.

"I like to see you bustlin' about and makin' the things howl," answered Jim, coolly helping himself to a seat, and drawing his legs under him like a Turk. "Guess I'll hang round and pick up a p'int or two 'bout cookin'."

"Listen till the little rascal!" rejoined the girl. "Just hark till him!"

At this moment the grocer made his advent into the kitchen, as smartly as if he had been shot from a cannon.

"You young villain, why didn't you bring back the basket?" he ejaculated. "I might as well have carried it in myself."

"Guess I didn't say you mightn't," answered the impudent boy. "S'pected to fotch it back, but got talkin' with this good-lookin' young lady, and clean furgot the whole bizness. There it is. Ain't no 'jections to your takin' it."

"Why, you rascally ragamuffin! Do you want me to burst your head in for your impudence?"

"Don't b'lieve you kin do it, little peas and parsnips," replied Jolly, saucily. "You'd find me a wuss weight to lift than you ever did the sand to mix with your sugar."

At this provocation the young man made a hasty movement toward the impertinent boy. But he was checked by the girl, who stepped hastily between.

"Away wid you!" she cried. "I won't have no scrimmages about my kitchen. The lad's a dacent lad, and it's yerself that pervoked him. Jist take your basket, and be off wid ye, afore ye get my temper up."

"I'll burst the young rat's snout, if ye gives me any impudence," answered the angry grocer.

"And maybe ye'd be likin' to bust Biddy Mulligan's snout, too," cried the woman, bustling up to him. "You're a spicy little sugar flea; aren't ye now? Get out wid ye, while I'm cool; for if I once get in a fluster—"

"You'll smash the fryingpan, I suppose," was the contemptuous reply, as the young man shouldered his basket.

"Over your head it'll be then."

With a laugh of scorn he departed, leaving the field to his antagonists.

"Didn't we settle little hop-and-go-fetch it?" laughed Jolly.

"The ugly blackguard!" ejaculated the angry woman. "To come here, insulting a dacent woman, in her own kitchen!"

She quite forgot, in her anger that the bulk of the provocation was on the other side.

"Don't ye be sp'ilin' yer pretty temper 'bout sich a skip-in-the-wind as that," remarked Jim.

"He's only mad 'cause I said you was a good-lookin' young lady. And I'd like to know who could help sayin' the same thing?"

"Faix, if ye've come here to poke fun at me, there's the door," answered Biddy. But the broad grin on her face showed that she was not

"I hollered at you, but I mought as well have talked French to a cigar Pompey. Didn't know you was gone deaf."

"I was studying something out," rejoined Mr. Keen. "What's up, Jolly Jim? Anything in the wind?"

"Guess we'd best git outer the wind," answered the boy, cautiously. "Too many ears scooting round here."

To their left opened a long entry, leading to some offices back. This offered shelter and privacy, and Mr. Keen led his young scout thither.

"My bag ain't none too full," said the boy, "but there's somethin' in it. Thought I'd best empty out fur another load."

"What is it?" asked the officer, indifferently.

Jolly Jim proceeded to tell what the reader already knows—the story of his pursuit of the two sports, and of the cute way in which he had introduced himself into the house.

"Got five minutes at the keyhole," he remarked. "Couldn't hear much, and they was so slap-up mysterious that ther' wasn't much sense in what I did grab. I was jist goin' to stike ile, when in comes that boy, mouthin' 'bout his old blackin'-box. I wish to Jericho ther' weren't no boys. They're allers nuisances."

"What do you call yourself, Jolly?" asked the amused officer.

"I don't count," answered the boy, sturdily. "Ther' ain't enough of me to make much difference. I'm a—a reception."

"An exception, you mean."

"If I'd 'a' meant that, I'd 'a' said that," rejoined Jolly, in a positive tone. "Jist s'pose we change the subjeck, and come to dots. Anyhow, I picked up a thing or two. Them chaps think the perlice is too close on the'r tracks, and they've got some baggage that they've a notion of movin'."

"Ha!" cried Mr. Keen, with much interest.

"And they're talkin' of crackin' a crib for somebody as don't pony up handsome. That's about all I nabbed. I couldn't cotch no names. But when a chap smells onions he generally thinks there's hash somewhere about."

"There may be something in this Jolly," said the officer, after a moment's reflection. "You have done well, boy. Keep it up, and you'll make a man yet."

"Keep up the watch on them coons?" asked Jolly, his face shining with satisfaction at this bit of praise.

"Yes. I'd put a man on the job. But I fancy I can trust you."

"It's my job, anyhow," answered the boy. "I blacked Bill Bates's boots, and didn't git nothin' but a kick and a cuss fur pay. He owes me fur that job, and if I don't git it outer him in one way, I will t'other. Hush!" he touched Mr. Keen's hand in warning, and turned his face toward the wall.

At the same moment the sound of a man's steps came heavily from the rear of the hall. A stout, roughly-dressed person passed without looking at them, and made his way toward the street.

Jolly gripped Mr. Keen's fingers in a nervous way, as he pointed after this personage.

"Bill Bates!" he whispered.

"Sure?"

"Sartin as duck-shootin'."

"What brings him here?" queried Mr. Keen, reflectively.

"I dunno what; but he looks as if he means business."

Mr. Keen was wide awake now, his eyes glistening.

"After him, boy," he sharply ordered.

"Don't lose sight of him, and don't let him catch sight of you. I must look into his business here."

"All right," cried Jolly, hoisting his pants, and setting his hat rakishly on his head. "I'll buzz him like a musketeer."

He was gone like a flash, darting into the street, and leaving Mr. Keen alone in the hallway.

"The lad is in his element now," remarked the officer. "But what brings that fellow here? There may be some loose threads to be picked up in this building."

He walked back toward the offices in the rear of the edifice.

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"Faix, if ye've come here to poke fun at me, there's the door," answered Biddy. But the broad grin on her face showed that she was not

deeply offended. "You've got more blarney than a pig's got squeal."

"It's the solid truth, anyhow," said Jolly, earnestly. "What are you sp'ilin' yer pretty hands fur, over them taters? Let me peel 'em. I'm a reg'lar boss at peelin' taters."

He took the knife from the girl's hands, she very willingly resigning it.

In five minutes more Jolly was as fully installed in her good graces, and as much master of the kitchen, as if he had spent half his life there. Biddy Mulligan had not been much troubled with flattery before, and it took with her simple soul.

"Like it here?" asked Jim.

"Loike it here, is it? Where one's got to slave mornin' till night, and never a good word to fling to a goose! Sure it's all scrub, scrub, and rub, rub, and roast, roast, and scold, scold, till the very soul is worn out o' me. To think that I ever come over from old Ireland, where I lived on the lashins of the land, for the likes of this!"

"Why don't you slide?"

"There ain't no use," answered Biddy, with a sigh. "Every one's wuss than t'other. There's a small family here, and no childers, and that's a comfort. Oh, the Lord o' marcy! What forever is the boy doin'? Sure and is that what ye call peelin' praties?"

Jim was taking off parings half an inch thick, and the greater part of the potatoes was going into the waste pan.

"I'm tryin' to git down under the eyes," explained the boy.

"Hand me the knife, or I'll take ye under the ears," she angrily exclaimed. "If missus was to see the loike of that I'd have no peace for the rest of me life."

"Let me see how you do it," remarked Jim, drawing up a chair, and fixing his eyes admiringly upon her deft fingers. "You're the gal that kin make the peelin's fly, anyhow," he exclaimed. "And is the missus so cranky?"

"Ye can well say that same. And the master's got a tongue like a trip-hammer. When he comes down I just stand quiverin'. They're quare folks, that's a fact."

"There's something queer about the house, then?" asked Jim carelessly.

Biddy looked around her before answering, and her voice sunk as she replied, in a deep tone:

"Faix an' there is. And mighty quare, too."

"Mercy take us!" exclaimed Jim, dropping his voice also, and looking up with deep interest. "If it's no secret, ye wouldn't mind tellin' a feller, now?"

"There's strangers that come and go here, and the Lord knows for what. And they walks in widout stoppin' to ring, as no dacent folks would. It's no secret as I'm bound to keep, though I don't ginerally talk about the missus's affairs."

"It looks as if ther' was goin's on, as oughtn't to be," repeated Jolly, in the same tone. "I'd be half afeared to stay in sich a house."

"I ain't told the worst yet," repeated Bddy, who was won over to special confidence by the deep interest of her listener. "Here's midnight maraudin's, and noises as don't mane no good. And—" She again paused to look about her, while her voice sunk to a mysterious whisper. "Would you believe it, I've got to cook for more than the family? And it comes back all eat up?"

"You don't say so?" ejaculated Jolly, though he could not quite see how food that was eaten up could come back. "But maybe the missus has a double-barreled appetite."

"Sure and can't ye see? Here's extry dishes, too. There's more folks in the house than one sees. That's what I mane. I've heered strange noises, when I've been up-stairs. But I ain't allowed to go up much, for the missus tends to all that. What do ye think of that now?"

"It's mighty curious."

"She's a low-downer, that's what she is. Folks that's aristocratical don't be after doin' their own work," and Biddy tossed her head in deep contempt. "Moind you, too, she don't let me slape in the house; and lashins o' room here. Is it quare that I've got my suspicions stirred up?"

Maybe they've got some prisoner locked up in the house," suggested Jolly.

"Sure an' I've thought that same meself. I've tried to get up to the upper floor, but missus always stops me."

"Do them stairs go straight up?"

"Aidade they do."

"Wouldn't I like to sneak up! Why it's just like a bandit story! S'pose it's a beautiful

lady, or a millionaire? We mought make our fortunes."

"Don't you try it!" she cried in alarm. "You don't know the master. He'd just crunch you if he caught you."

"Do you see that?" remarked Jolly, stretching out his arm, and clutching it just below the shoulder. "Do you reckernise what that is? That's muscle."

"Faix, ye'd be no more nor a fly in his hands. Ye'd best be goin' now, for I wouldn't have master nor missus findin' ye here for a goold guinea.—Blather on it, there's that bell again. It kapes me trottin' to the door from mornin' till night, avick."

She moved away to answer the bell, leaving Jolly gazing with deep interest into the pan of potatoes. Biddy was not long absent. Her lonely soul craved for company, and the gamin's adroit flattery had quite won her over. She hastened back to the kitchen more briskly than she had left it, saying, as she entered:

"It's the same thing; run, run, and all about nothing. Somebody to buy rags, or somebody to sell doormats, or—Mercy on us all, what's 'come of the boy?"

The kitchen was empty. Jolly Jim had disappeared.

Biddy stood with open mouth and staring eyes, dumfounded by this mystery. She then ran hastily into the yard, and looked down the alley, as if expecting to see Jolly making off with the silver spoons. But there was no trace of him there. At this point a new thought struck her mind.

"Sure, and has the risky little rogue gone up-stairs? And if the master catches him he won't leave as much of him together as'd make chop-pin's for a mince pie. Oh, the good mother, what forever am I to do?"

She looked up the stairs, and called in a low voice, but no answer came. Biddy seated herself beside her potato-pan, and wrung her hands in utter dismay. She dreaded some horrible fate for the boy.

She was quite right in her suspicion. Jolly had gone up stairs. No sooner was her back turned than he had hastily taken off his shoes, and flung them into the depths of a kitchen closet. Then without a moment's hesitation he had begun to ascend the rear flight of stairs. They creaked loudly under his tread, but the boy had not a spark of timidity in his nature, and he went boldly upward.

The first flight ended in a small rear room. A closed door shut off another room from which came the dull sound of voices. Jolly paused a moment and listened. He could make nothing out. The voices were too low. The maid servant's spy-glass was there—the key-hole—but it was occupied by a key, and nothing was to be gained by that method.

"There's one comfort," he muttered. "If I can't see nor hear them, they can't me. Guess I'll dig on up."

The second flight of stairs ended on a landing, with a room door on either side. He hesitated and listened for a moment, before trying either. All was quiet within. He put his hand on the knob of the door to his right.

At this moment he heard Biddy's voice, calling him from the foot of the stairs.

"Reckon I won't go down," he murmured. "Wish she'd hold her tongue. She'll stir up some of the folks with her ridik'lous callin'."

He tried the door whose handle he had grasped. It failed to yield to his hand. It was locked.

"Dished there. Let me try t'other."

To his satisfaction this door yielded. He pushed it open a crack and listened. There came a sound from below, as if the persons he had heard talking on the second floor had been disturbed by Biddy's call, and were opening the door at the foot of the stairs.

It was a moment for prompt decision. The boy pushed wide open the door to his left, and stepped quickly into the room before him.

There are such things as leaps in the dark, and Jolly Jim had taken one.

We must return to the kitchen, and to Biddy's sharp ears, for a record of what followed.

She was nervously fumbling in her potatoes when she heard a loud, harsh cry, followed by the tones of Jolly Jim's voice. Then a door was slammed, and quick footsteps were heard on the stairs.

For a minute or two the sounds continued. It seemed like a fierce altercation, and the noise of a scuffle. Poor Biddy grew pale as a ghost, and could hardly keep on her feet for nervousness.

The sounds grew less distinct. The scuffling noise ceased. Voices were yet audible, but

they were lower, and the tones of the boy's voice were not distinguishable.

Biddy fell nervelessly into her chair, and grasped the potato-knife like a weapon of offense. What had happened to the boy? Were they crunching him alive? She was almost on the point of screaming and flying to the street to give the alarm, when the sound of new steps on the stairs checked her.

Too much unnerved to move, she clutched the rounds of the chair with one hand, and savagely grasped the knife in the other. She half feared it was her turn to be made a meal of by the dreaded master.

CHAPTER VI.

GOING IT BLIND.

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This personage looked with astonishment upon the boy, and called out loudly:

"Hillo! young'un. Who the devil are you—if a chap might ask?"

"Scuse me," faltered the gamin, for once at a loss for an excuse. "I—I lost my goat; and some of the boys said as how he came up here."

"Lost your goat, hey? You infernal little rag-baby! you'd better lost your ears before you came blundering into this rat-pen."

As he spoke steps sounded on the stairs. Then through the open door, a third person entered the room, on whom the boy's eyes fell with a quiver of apprehension. It was the sturdy frame and hardened features of Bill Bates.

"Hey, Joe, what's up?" he demanded. "By the 'tarnal blazes! what brings that boy here? His voice was full of suspicion."

"Do you know him?"

"You bet I do! Grab the little hound. He's on the spy; shoot him!"

"I'm only arter my goat," pleaded Jim, looking covertly around for a chance to run.

The man appealed to grasped at him; but the boy eluded his hand, and darted to the closed door opposite. He seized the handle of this and shook it furiously, but in vain. It was firmly locked. Yet his effort was not utterly without effect. From the other side of the door came a woman's voice, in tones of moving appeal.

"Oh! who is there? Help me. Help me to escape from this dreadful place!"

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In a moment Jim was seized by four strong hands and dragged forcibly back from the door.

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"Like it here?" asked Jim.

"Loike it here, is it? Where one's got to slave mornin' till night, and never a good word to fling to a goose! Sure it's all scrub, scrub, and rub, rub, and roast, roast, and scold, scold, till the very soul is worn out o' me. To think that I ever come over from old Ireland, where I lived on the lashins of the land, for the likes of this!"

"Why don't you slide?"

"There ain't no use," answered Biddy, with a sigh. "Every one's wuss than t'other. There's a small family here, and no childers, and that's a comfort. Oh, the Lord o' marcy! What forever is the boy doin'? Sure and is that what ye call peelin' praties?"

Jim was taking off parings half an inch thick, and the greater part of the potatoes was going into the waste pan.

"I'm tryin' to git down under the eyes," explained the boy.

"Hand me the knife, or I'll take ye under the ears," she angrily exclaimed. "If missus was to see the loike of that I'd have no peace for the rest of me life."

"Let me see how you do it," remarked Jim, drawing up a chair, and fixing his eyes admiringly upon her deft fingers. "You're the gal that kin make the peelin' fly, anyhow," he exclaimed. "And is the missus so cranky?"

"Ye can well say that same. And the master's got a tongue like a trip-hammer. When he comes down I just stand quiverin'. They're quare folks, that's a fact."

"There's something queer about the house, then?" asked Jim carelessly.

Biddy looked around her before answering, and her voice sunk as she replied, in a deep tone:

"Faix an' there is. And mighty quare, too."

"Mercy take us!" exclaimed Jim, dropping his voice also, and looking up with deep interest. "If it's no secret, ye wouldn't mind tellin' a feller, now?"

"There's strangers that come and go here, and the Lord knows for what. And they walks in widout stoppin' to ring, as no dacent folks would. It's no secret as I'm bound to keep, though I don't ginerally talk about the missus's affairs."

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"I ain't told the worst yet," repeated Bddy, who was won over to special confidence by the deep interest of her listener. "Here's midnight maraudin's, and noises as don't mane no good. And—" She again paused to look about her, while her voice sunk to a mysterious whisper. "Would you believe it, I've got to cook for more than the family? And it comes back all eat up?"

"You don't say so?" ejaculated Jolly, though he could not quite see how food that was eaten up could come back. "But maybe the missus has a double-barreled appetite."

"Sure and can't ye see? Here's extry dishes, too. There's more folks in the house than one sees. That's what I mane. I've heered strange noises, when I've been up-stairs. But I ain't allowed to go up much, for the missus tends to all that. What do ye think of that now?"

"It's mighty curious."

"She's a low-downer, that's what she is. Folks that's aristocratical don't be after doin' their own work," and Biddy tossed her head in deep contempt. "Mind you, too, she don't let me slape in the house; and lashins o' room here. Is it quare that I've got my suspicions stirred up?"

Maybe they've got some prisoner locked up in the house," suggested Jolly.

"Sure an' I've thought that same meself. I've tried to get up to the upper floor, but missus always stops me."

"Do them stairs go straight up?"

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"Wouldn't I like to sneak up! Why it's just like a bandit story! S'pose it's a beautiful

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"Don't you try it!" she cried in alarm. "You don't know the master. He'd just crunch you if he caught you."

"Do you see that?" remarked Jolly, stretching out his arm, and clutching it just below the shoulder. "Do you reckernise what that is? That's muscle."

"Faix, ye'd be no more nor a fly in his hands. Ye'd best be goin' now, for I wouldn't have master nor missus findin' ye here for a goold guinea.—Blather on it, there's that bell again. It kapes me trottin' to the door from mornin' till night, avick."

She moved away to answer the bell, leaving Jolly gazing with deep interest into the pan of potatoes. Biddy was not long absent. Her lonely soul craved for company, and the gamin's adroit flattery had quite won her over. She hastened back to the kitchen more briskly than she had left it, saying, as she entered:

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Biddy stood with open mouth and staring eyes, dumfounded by this mystery. She then ran hastily into the yard, and looked down the alley, as if expecting to see Jolly making off with the silver spoons. But there was no trace of him there. At this point a new thought struck her mind.

"Sure, and has the risky little rogue gone up-stairs? And if the master catches him he won't leave as much of him together as'd make chop-pin's for a mince pie. Oh, the good mother, what forever am I to do?"

She looked up the stairs, and called in a low voice, but no answer came. Biddy seated herself beside her potato-pan, and wrung her hands in utter dismay. She dreaded some horrible fate for the boy.

She was quite right in her suspicion. Jolly had gone up stairs. No sooner was her back turned than he had hastily taken off his shoes, and flung them into the depths of a kitchen closet. Then without a moment's hesitation he had begun to ascend the rear flight of stairs. They creaked loudly under his tread, but the boy had not a spark of timidity in his nature, and he went boldly upward.

The first flight ended in a small rear room. A closed door shut off another room from which came the dull sound of voices. Jolly paused a moment and listened. He could make nothing out. The voices were too low. The maid servant's spy-glass was there—the key-hole—but it was occupied by a key, and nothing was to be gained by that method.

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"I'm tryin' to git down under the eyes," explained the boy.

"Hand me the knife, or I'll take ye under the ears," she angrily exclaimed. "If missus was to see the loike of that I'd have no peace for the rest of me life."

"Let me see how you do it," remarked Jim, drawing up a chair, and fixing his eyes admiringly upon her deft fingers. "You're the gal that kin make the peelin' fly, anyhow," he exclaimed. "And is the missus so cranky?"

"Ye can well say that same. And the master's got a tongue like a trip-hammer. When he comes down I just stand quiverin'. They're quare folks, that's a fact."

"There's something queer about the house, then?" asked Jim carelessly.

Biddy looked around her before answering, and her voice sunk as she replied, in a deep tone:

"Faix an' there is. And mighty quare, too."

"Mercy take us!" exclaimed Jim, dropping his voice also, and looking up with deep interest. "If it's no secret, ye wouldn't mind tellin' a feller, now?"

"There's strangers that come and go here, and the Lord knows for what. And they walks in widout stoppin' to ring, as no dacent folks would. It's no secret as I'm bound to keep, though I don't ginerally talk about the missus's affairs."

"It looks as if ther' was goin's on, as oughtn't to be," repeated Jolly, in the same tone. "I'd be half afear'd to stay in sich a house."

"I ain't told the worst yet," repeated Bddy, who was won over to special confidence by the deep interest of her listener. "Here's midnight maraudin's, and noises as don't mane no good. And—" She again paused to look about her, while her voice sunk to a mysterious whisper. "Would you believe it, I've got to cook for more than the family? And it comes back all eat up?"

"You don't say so?" ejaculated Jolly, though he could not quite see how food that was eaten up could come back. "But maybe the missus has a double-barreled appetite."

"Sure and can't ye see? Here's extry dishes, too. There's more folks in the house than one sees. That's what I mane. I've heered strange noises, when I've been up-stairs. But I ain't allowed to go up much, for the missus tends to all that. What do ye think of that now?"

"It's mighty curious."

"She's a low-downer, that's what she is. Folks that's aristocratical don't be after doin' their own work," and Biddy tossed her head in deep contempt. "Moind you, too, she don't let me slape in the house; and lashins o' room here. Is it quare that I've got my suspicions stirred up?"

Maybe they've got some prisoner locked up in the house," suggested Jolly.

"Sure an' I've thought that same meself. I've tried to get up to the upper floor, but missus always stops me."

"Do them stairs go straight up?"

"Aidade they do."

"Wouldn't I like to sneak up! Why it's just like a bandit story! S'pose it's a beautiful

lady, or a millionaire? We mought make our fortunes."

"Don't you try it!" she cried in alarm. "You don't know the master. He'd just crunch you if he caught you."

"Do you see that?" remarked Jolly, stretching out his arm, and clutching it just below the shoulder. "Do you reckernise what that is? That's muscle."

"Faix, ye'd be no more nor a fly in his hands. Ye'd best be goin' now, for I wouldn't have master nor missus findin' ye here for a goold guinea.—Blather on it, there's that bell again. It kapes me trottin' to the door from mornin' till night, avick."

She moved away to answer the bell, leaving Jolly gazing with deep interest into the pan of potatoes. Biddy was not long absent. Her lonely soul craved for company, and the gamin's adroit flattery had quite won her over. She hastened back to the kitchen more briskly than she had left it, saying, as she entered:

"It's the same thing; run, run, and all about nothing. Somebody to buy rags, or somebody to sell doormats, or—Mercy on us all, what's 'come of the boy?"

The kitchen was empty. Jolly Jim had disappeared.

Biddy stood with open mouth and staring eyes, dumfounded by this mystery. She then ran hastily into the yard, and looked down the alley, as if expecting to see Jolly making off with the silver spoons. But there was no trace of him there. At this point a new thought struck her mind.

"Sure, and has the risky little rogue gone up-stairs? And if the master catches him he won't leave as much of him together as'd make chop-pin's for a mince pie. Oh, the good mother, what forever am I to do?"

She looked up the stairs, and called in a low voice, but no answer came. Biddy seated herself beside her potato-pan, and wrung her hands in utter dismay. She dreaded some horrible fate for the boy.

She was quite right in her suspicion. Jolly had gone up stairs. No sooner was her back turned than he had hastily taken off his shoes, and flung them into the depths of a kitchen closet. Then without a moment's hesitation he had begun to ascend the rear flight of stairs. They creaked loudly under his tread, but the boy had not a spark of timidity in his nature, and he went boldly upward.

The first flight ended in a small rear room. A closed door shut off another room from which came the dull sound of voices. Jolly paused a moment and listened. He could make nothing out. The voices were too low. The maid servant's spy-glass was there—the key-hole—but it was occupied by a key, and nothing was to be gained by that method.

"There's one comfort," he muttered. "If I can't see nor hear them, they can't me. Guess I'll dig on up."

The second flight of stairs ended on a landing, with a room door on either side. He hesitated and listened for a moment, before trying either. All was quiet within. He put his hand on the knob of the door to his right.

At this moment he heard Biddy's voice, calling him from the foot of the stairs.

"Reckon I won't go down," he murmured. "Wish she'd hold her tongue. She'll stir up some of the folks with her ridik'lous callin'."

He tried the door whose handle he had grasped. It failed to yield to his hand. It was locked.

"Dished there. Let me try t'other."

To his satisfaction this door yielded. He pushed it open a crack and listened. There came a sound from below, as if the persons he had heard talking on the second floor had been disturbed by Biddy's call, and were opening the door at the foot of the stairs.

It was a moment for prompt decision. The boy pushed wide open the door to his left, and stepped quickly into the room before him.

There are such things as leaps in the dark, and Jolly Jim had taken one.

We must return to the kitchen, and to Biddy's sharp ears, for a record of what followed.

She was nervously fumbling in her potatoes when she heard a loud, harsh cry, followed by the tones of Jolly Jim's voice. Then a door was slammed, and quick footsteps were heard on the stairs.

For a minute or two the sounds continued. It seemed like a fierce altercation, and the noise of a scuffle. Poor Biddy grew pale as a ghost, and could hardly keep on her feet for nervousness.

The sounds grew less distinct. The scuffling noise ceased. Voices were yet audible, but

they were lower, and the tones of the boy's voice were not distinguishable.

Biddy fell nervelessly into her chair, and grasped the potato-knife like a weapon of offense. What had happened to the boy? Were they crunching him alive? She was almost on the point of screaming and flying to the street to give the alarm, when the sound of new steps on the stairs checked her.

Too much unnerved to move, she clutched the rounds of the chair with one hand, and savagely grasped the knife in the other. She half feared it was her turn to be made a meal of by the dreaded master.

CHAPTER VI.

GOING IT BLIND.

JOLLY JIM had undoubtedly fallen into trouble. As to what that trouble was, we must follow him up-stairs to discover. On hastily pushing open the door at the head of the stairs, and entering the room before him, there was no time to think. Some one was coming from the room at the foot of the stairs. He had to take the chances of the room at the head.

But it was from the frying-pan into the fire. He found himself in a small, square, sparsely-furnished room, with a single narrow window. A door opposite him led into some further room beyond. But what at once took the boy's attention was the figure of a tall, stout man, with a seamed and harsh countenance, who stood in the center of the room.

This personage looked with astonishment upon the boy, and called out loudly:

"Hillo! young'un. Who the devil are you—if a chap might ask?"

"Scuse me," faltered the gamin, for once at a loss for an excuse. "I—I lost my goat; and some of the boys said as how he came up here."

"Lost your goat, hey? You infernal little rag-baby! you'd better lost your ears before you came blundering into this rat-pen."

As he spoke steps sounded on the stairs. Then through the open door, a third person entered the room, on whom the boy's eyes fell with a quiver of apprehension. It was the sturdy frame and hardened features of Bill Bates.

"Hey, Joe, what's up?" he demanded. "By the 'tarnal blazes! what brings that boy here? His voice was full of suspicion."

"Do you know him?"

"You bet I do! Grab the little hound. He's on the spy; shoot him!"

"I'm only arter my goat," pleaded Jim, looking covertly around for a chance to run.

The man appealed to grasped at him; but the boy eluded his hand, and darted to the closed door opposite. He seized the handle of this and shook it furiously, but in vain. It was firmly locked. Yet his effort was not utterly without effect. From the other side of the door came a woman's voice, in tones of moving appeal.

"Oh! who is there? Help me. Help me to escape from this dreadful place!"

"Snatch the young hound!" roared Bill Bates. "Rip him open if he kicks! Quick, he kin jump like a flea!"

In a moment Jim was seized by four strong hands and dragged forcibly back from the door.

"Jist gimme my goat, as you've got somewhere 'bout this house, and lemme go," he pleaded, with well-assumed simplicity. "You'd jist better, or I'll tell the perlice, see if I don't."

"Reef yer gab, or I'll let you down by the run," growled Bill, catching the boy's throat in a choking clutch. "He's a blasted young spy, Joe. Only yisterday I cotech him listenin'. And to-day I see'd the little varmint talkin' with Harry Keen. Thought I didn't see you, hey, you bag o' rags? What do you say, Joe? Shall I squeeze the wind out of him, and be done with it?"

"No, no," answered the other, hastily; "that's too risky, if he's Harry Keen's boy. I don't want to be scragged for a toad-hunter like this. Trice him up, and stick a gag in his jaws and leave him. We can hold him in limbo till the coast's clear."

"I'm agreeable," growled Bill. "Only this rat wouldn't no more be missed in York than one fly out of a room-full. Whar's yer twine?"

He loosed his hold somewhat on the boy's throat. Jim took the opportunity of this reprieve to make another effort to coax off from his captors; but a renewed squeeze from Bill's strong fingers suddenly closed his current of eloquence.

"If ye don't back-haul yer gab, I'll send ye to Davy Jones on my own book. Salt him down, Joe. We're wastin' time on the gutter rat."

Joe had now procured some strong cord,

with which he began to bind the boy's hands and feet. He seemed very skillful at the work, and in a minute's time Jim was unable to move hand or foot.

He had desisted from any effort to speak as soon as he found that it was useless, and submitted quietly to the hands of his captors.

Not content with tying him, they next gagged him, forcing a handkerchief into his mouth, which was secured by a bandage tied firmly around his head.

"There, I guess he's settled," said Joe, looking down grimly on the prisoner, who lay helpless as a log on the floor. "What's next, Bill?"

"We'll find some other place to talk 'bout it," Bill gruffly answered.

"I want to see that fool of a girl in the kitchen. Hang her dull brains, she let this dirty rascal up here."

It was his descending steps which Biddy had heard with so much apprehension, as she sat nervelessly in her chair, and clutched her fingers around the handle of the potato-knife, like one ready to fight to the death.

"What ails you, you stupid fool?" asked Joe, harshly, on entering the kitchen.

"I—I've had a stroke," she faltered.

"You'll get a swipe, and that's worse, if you don't walk level," he harshly replied.

"I'm 'feared it's applepox. My great-great-grandmother—rest her soul—died of that same complaint."

"Shet up!" he snarled. "You let that boy in here, you ninny! I've a notion to set you adrift, without a cent or a character, for your confounded dumbness."

"Let a boy in? Sorra the bit do I know what you're talkin' about, at all."

"You lie, you hussy! You let him in the back door. I've just kicked him out the front. So that's settled. But if you let any other stranger into the kitchen, I'll wring your stupid neck, hang me if I don't!"

"Sure and I'm no wiser nor a goosel. What is it, at all, at all, that the master's talking about? Is it me that would let a man or a boy intill me kitchen—me, Biddy Mulligan, of County Clare, as can't bear the very sight of such craythers? Now will you be after goin' afore I get into a temper?"

"That will do, Biddy. You lie, and that's an end of it. Mind that there's no more of this."

He turned on his heel and walked away.

Biddy dropped in a wilted fashion into a chair as soon as he had disappeared, while the knife fell from her open fingers to the floor.

"Oh, the bloody rascal!" she muttered. "Never did his dirty foot kick the poor laddie out! He's murdered! He's kilt in cold blood! Only I'm too shook to move hand nor foot, I'd raise the street ag'in' the butchers! There's summat got to be done, and Biddy Mulligan's the one that's to do it. But sorrow's me if I know what it's to be."

She fell into a deep reflection, as she reclined exhausted in her chair.

Evidently for once in his life Jolly Jim had been too smart. Not that this was his first scrape. Such a bustling and risky young reprobate could scarcely have got to his age without more than one difficulty. But this was certainly the worst. And what made it more vexatious was the fact that the prisoner for whom he had been seeking undoubtedly was in the adjoining room, and he utterly unable to help her.

He lay on the floor like a trussed rat, helpless and motionless. Only his eyes, ears and brain were active. The first two brought him nothing. He could not see any way out of his scrape, and there was no sound to exercise his ears. He had only his brain to fall back upon, and that brought him no comfort.

"I'm a rascally little fool," he said to himself. "If I'd had the sense of a singed cat I'd brung the perlice down on this shanty, 'stead of wantin' to pick all the plums out the pie myself. That's a boy's sense, and I never see'd a boy yit that had the sense of a pigeon. Afore they let me out this, they'll run off the gal; and then the fat's all in the fire."

It was certainly a disheartening prospect. The prisoner continued to think as industriously as he could, but nothing came of it. He couldn't think himself out of those ropes. Thinking proving useless, he tried other measures. He commenced to wriggle over the floor, and contrived, with some difficulty, to twist and roll himself over to the window. Here he raised himself slowly and with great difficulty, till he got his eyes to the level of the sash.

He thus managed to look out through the window, with the faint hope of being able to warn somebody of his situation. But the hope

proved a vain one. Instead of perceiving an opposite window close at hand, with some quick-witted individual behind it, as he had hoped, he got only a view of an open space in the rear of a row of houses, and with nothing that held out a shadow of hope.

Leaving the window, he next wriggled his way to the door, at the head of the stairs. Turning his back to it, he managed to insert a finger under the crack at the bottom of the door. But it was of no use. If not locked, it was at least firmly latched, and failed to yield.

"That's played out," he muttered. "If it had been open I bet I'd snaked it down stairs to Biddy Mulligan. It's no go, and I reckon I'd best take a snooze."

Casting himself at full length on the floor, he was as good as his word. He was of too reckless a temperament to take trouble hard, and within half an hour was as sound asleep as he had ever been in his life.

The hours rolled on, and still the boy continued to slumber. The sun sunk low in the western sky. Day was rapidly coming to an end. Night, with all its deeds of darkness, was approaching.

Voices sounded in the adjoining room, one of them the soft, sweet voice which the boy had previously heard, the other a harsher voice, but still the tones of a woman. The tones ceased, and a few minutes afterward steps came up the stairs leading to Jolly's prison.

The door opened, and a slim, raw-boned, hard-faced woman entered. She stared with surprise on observing the quiet slumber of the young prisoner.

"Mercy on us, the boy takes it cool," she muttered. "Wonder if he knows how nigh he come to a final settler from Bill Bates? It was only Joe that saved him. Anyhow, I guess he don't want no supper. He's sound enough for a night's sleep."

She retired a little cautiously, as if not wishing to wake the sleeping boy.

"That's a cool youngster you've nabbed, Joe," she said, on entering the room below. "I was going to take him his supper, but he's snoozing away like a hedgehog. A chap that's sleeping like that ain't in want of grub."

"Maybe he's 'possumin' on you," answered the man. "Let me get a squint at him. He's a shrewd young coon."

He went quietly up the stairs, and entered the room as noiselessly as possible. Jolly lay on the broad of his back, breathing heavily and steadily, and to all appearance as unconscious as a log. Joe looked down on him for a minute, and slightly stirred him with his foot. But he only got a grunt for his pains. The boy turned half over, and doubled himself up, but gave no signs of awaking.

"There's no fear of him," muttered the jailer. "It's wonderful how a boy like that can sleep."

He walked away as noiselessly as possible, and left the door slightly ajar, so as not to disturb the sleeper in closing it.

"He'll be in no mischief while he's snoozing. So there's no use stirring him up. I don't fancy, though, he has much chance of getting out of them ropes."

He laughed, as he thought of how firmly he had secured his prisoner.

Yet there is such a thing as trusting too much to appearances. Jolly was not half as sound asleep as he seemed. The fact was that he had been awakened by the noise made by the woman in retreating, and his apparent sound sleep on the man's visit was all a trick. He was as wide-awake as he had ever been in his life.

His visitor had no sooner gone than Jolly threw off his seeming lethargy. He would have laughed if he had had any voice to laugh with, but he did his best by going through the motions.

"Sold 'em that time, anyhow," he said to himself. "And blazes, if he ain't left the door open! 'Feared of wakin' me." An internal laugh followed these thoughts.

The lad's long cogitations had not been without effect. He had a plan of escape laid out. A very risky one, it is true, but drowning men catch at straws.

By dint of twisting, he had slightly loosened the cord that confined his arms. His wrists had been tied together behind his back, but his hands were free, and capable of a slight movement. His knees were also free to bend. On these slight circumstances he depended to escape.

A few minutes' noiseless movements brought him to the stair door. This, with considerable effort, he managed to push open, and the sheer descent of the stairs lay before him.

As to how to descend them he had already

made up his mind. He might fail, and slide headlong down, but it was worth the effort.

Twisting himself around until his feet hung over the open space, he pushed forward, inch by inch, with his hands, letting his body fall at the same time. It was a slow process, and fifteen minutes had elapsed ere he fairly landed himself on the stairs.

His situation was now the following: His bare feet had caught the edge of one of the lower steps, while his hands grasped, as tightly as possible, the edge of the upper one. Not an audible sound had yet been made.

Now, resting his feet firmly on their place of support, and bending his knees, he let his body slide easily down, until his hands caught the edge of the step next below. This he firmly grasped, and released his feet. Straightening his knees he was able to reach with his feet the succeeding step. He had accomplished the first stage in the difficult descent.

Drawing a long breath, Jolly repeated the maneuver successfully.

"It's hunky goin' down," he cogitated, "but it wouldn't be so easy goin' up."

The stairs creaked a little with his weight, as he moved step by step downward in this slow way. The movements were necessarily made with great deliberation, and he was in incessant dread of being heard and discovered. There was evidently no one in the adjoining room, or he must have been heard.

Fifteen minutes landed Jolly safely on the floor of the room at the foot of the stairs. Resting here for a few minutes, during which he intently listened for any sound of alarm, he drew himself slowly toward the head of the second flight.

This he descended in the same slow method. But this flight was closed by a door at the bottom. Reaching this position, Jolly listened for a minute. There was no sound below except an occasional footstep, as Biddy went about her work.

Jolly tapped lightly upon the door with his bare toes. An exclamation of surprise came from the kitchen. The door was hastily opened, and there stood Biddy Mulligan, her eyes dilated with astonishment.

"The Lord be gude to us!" she ejaculated, with uplifted hands. "Is it the boy hisself, or is it the devil in his image? Sure, and I'm desperate afeared of the tied-up crayther."

CHAPTER VII.

HARRY KEEN FINDS AN OLD FRIEND AND JOLLY JIM A NEW ONE.

WE must leave the boy in the dubious position into which he had got himself, and return to Harry Keen, the detective. The latter person, after Jolly's departure from the hall of the building in which they had met, walked back for the purpose of investigating the object of Bill Bates's visit.

"It looks all on the square," he muttered. "Real Estate, Conveyancing, Attorneys at Law; all thoroughly honest folks, no doubt. But what business can that scoundrel have with these honest scions of the law? That's a point worth finding out."

He walked on through the building, reading the names on the various doors.

"Wilson; Prober; Jackson; Somers;—nothing wrong about them. All highly reputable—Jack Prime! He's here, eh? That's my boy. I must go in and interview lively Jack."

He pushed open the door before him, and entered a room well garnished with cases of law books, but bung also with fishing tackle, firearms, deers' horns, tobacco-pipes, foils, etc., etc.

In its center sat a young man, in a shooting jacket. He had his feet on the table, a pipe in his mouth, and was diligently perusing a volume that looked more like a modern novel than a legal tome.

"Lord, why don't you knock?" he exclaimed, dropping his feet and the book at the same time. "What is it? Jones against Brown? Or Tom Samson versus—? Hillo! Harry Keen, by all that's good! Hang me, if I didn't think I was caught by some heavy client, taking recreation from my arduous labors. You gave me a deuce of a start, Hal!"

"The same old Jack Prime, I see," laughed the detective. "Give us your hard, Jack. How goes it, old crony? Not much trouble with the heavy clients, eh?"

"No, bless them. They don't rise to my bait worth a cent. For which I am duly grateful, for the law's a confounded bore. Take a seat, my boy. Tell me all about New York. I'm just in from a campaign among the Lake Dusky trout."

with which he began to bind the boy's hands and feet. He seemed very skillful at the work, and in a minute's time Jim was unable to move hand or foot.

He had desisted from any effort to speak as soon as he found that it was useless, and submitted quietly to the hands of his captors.

Not content with tying him, they next gagged him, forcing a handkerchief into his mouth, which was secured by a bandage tied firmly around his head.

"There, I guess he's settled," said Joe, looking down grimly on the prisoner, who lay helpless as a log on the floor. "What's next, Bill?"

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Not content with tying him, they next gagged him, forcing a handkerchief into his mouth, which was secured by a bandage tied firmly around his head.

"There, I guess he's settled," said Joe, looking down grimly on the prisoner, who lay helpless as a log on the floor. "What's next, Bill?"

"We'll find some other place to talk 'bout it," Bill gruffly answered.

"I want to see that fool of a girl in the kitchen. Hang her dull brains, she let this dirty rascal up here."

It was his descending steps which Biddy had heard with so much apprehension, as she sat nervelessly in her chair, and clutched her fingers around the handle of the potato-knife, like one ready to fight to the death.

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"Sure and I'm no wiser nor a goosel. What is it, at all, at all, that the master's talking about? Is it me that would let a man or a boy intill me kitchen—me, Biddy Mulligan, of County Clare, as can't bear the very sight of such craythers? Now will you be after goin' afore I get into a temper?"

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He turned on his heel and walked away. Biddy dropped in a wilted fashion into a chair as soon as he had disappeared, while the knife fell from her open fingers to the floor.

"Oh, the bloody rascal!" she muttered. "Never did his dirty foot kick the poor laddie out! He's murdered! He's kilt in cold blood! Only I'm too shook to move hand nor foot, I'd raise the street ag'in' the butchers! There's summat got to be done, and Biddy Mulligan's the one that's to do it. But sorrow's me if I know what it's to be."

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He lay on the floor like a trussed rat, helpless and motionless. Only his eyes, ears and brain were active. The first two brought him nothing. He could not see any way out of his scrape, and there was no sound to exercise his ears. He had only his brain to fall back upon, and that brought him no comfort.

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She chafed his wrists and ankles, crooning away in pitying tones the while.

"All right now," he ejaculated, and he sprang up and cracked his heels together. "I don't keer a fig fur a fire-place full on 'em. If any of 'em's spry enough to nab Jolly Jim now they kin take the medal in the next circus. But see here, Biddy. Won't they s'pect you?"

He gathered up the cut ends of rope, and thrust them into the fire.

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"I hope I am not throwin' you out of a place," said Jolly, with some concern.

"Is it me?" and Biddy gave a wild laugh. "Is it meself you mane? Faix an' don't ye know that we's got the upper hand, and the missuses has got to come beggin' for us? Sure, and I can have a dozen of 'em beggin' for Biddy Mulligan afore we're a day older, and take me pick and choose. It's little indade ye know if ye think the missuses is bosses of the kitchen nowadays."

Laughing to herself to think that the millennium of the servant-girls had arrived, Biddy bustled about the kitchen, hastily getting together the few things that belonged to her.

"And I'll have ye for witness that I took no silver spoons, and nothin' that's not me own," she declared. "There mought be pickin's and stealin's here, but I want naught of it. Biddy Mulligan's honest, anyway."

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"Never shall it be said," she declared, "as Biddy Mulligan left a house underhand. It's by the front door I'll go, and with me head up like a girl that's come from Irish lords, of the

tenth century. Is it for me to disgrace me an' thestors?"

She proudly led the way, Jolly following with some admiration of this long-removed scion of the nobility.

They had reached the hall, and were near the front door, when a cry that was half a shout and half a curse came from the upper floors. It was followed by the slamming of doors, and the sound of heavy feet.

"Hoicks away!" yelled the boy, with a cry that could be heard throughout the house. "The fox has broke cover. Yere come the hounds. Quick, Biddy. The job's bu'sted, and slide's the word now."

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"They're comin'" cried Jolly. "But I'd 'vise 'em to keep the'r paws off this coon. Mought as well try to tread on a 'skeeter."

"May the devil fly away wid 'em, head, foot, and baggage!" ejaculated Biddy fervently. "If I take a place ag'in it'll be wid honest folks, as ain't allers on the lookout for spoons."

But the pursuers apparently had thought better of it. They failed to make their appearance, and the two new friends trudged on contentedly.

An hour afterward Jolly made his appearance at the down-town office, where we saw him in a previous chapter in company with Harry Keen.

He was too late. The building was closed, with the exception of a sort of lodge, where sat an officer on night duty.

"Mr. Keen's off home these two hours. You will have to look for him there," announced this person.

Jolly did so. Another hour had elapsed ere he found the officer in his up town residence. He was at supper when the boy was announced.

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"Don't keer if I do," answered Jolly. "Ginerally take supper at the St. Nicholas, but guess I'll swallow a bite with you, for this once."

When Jolly had finished his bite there was little left on the table. The boy had a fresh appetite.

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He proceeded to relate his adventures. The detective heard him to the end, and then jumped briskly up, with a face full of energy.

"That's news, my boy. We must to work like beavers. They may remove the girl before an hour. Hurry back there, and if you see anything suspicious use your wits. I will be after you in half an hour with a force to raid the concern. Stir out like lightning. You may win your spurs to-night."

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CHAPTER VIII.

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Will sat easily back in his chair, and flourished a paper-cutter in a listless manner.

"I am beginning to get my eyes open, that's the truth," he remarked. "I did feel dreadfully at first, as you know, but I begin to fancy that I have been made a fool of. It is not so easy to pick up a girl in the streets of New York, and

"I didn't expect to find you here," replied the officer. "We last met, you know, on the peak of the Catskills, and then you had your nose pointed due west."

"Exactly. Didn't go far, though. Struck a reef at Niagara, and had to lay by for repairs. Take a pipe, Hal. We'll have a sociable smoke together."

The visitor did as requested, and soon the two boon companions were seated with tilted chairs, their heels on the table, and blowing clouds of smoke into the air.

"See here, Jack," began Mr. Keen. "I won't beat round the bush with you. I'm here on a professional visit."

"Lord! You haven't a writ against me?"

"Not yet. Your turn hasn't come. But I want to know what sort of company you're in. I just met a regular night-hawk sporting about this edifice, and I want to know what brings him here. I suppose you know what sort of customers fill the offices around you?"

"Most of them," rejoined Jack. "Whole-souled, honest fellows, too, I'll vouch for that. There are mysteries, of course. Never was a place of this size without its mysteries."

"Of what shape and size?"

"Well, it's a mystery how some of the poor devils make a living. I'm not run down with clients myself, but thank the stars, I can do without them. But some of my comrades pine for briefs, and must go tick for their bread and ale. Don't know any, though, that is in the shady line. There's only one chap about whom I've heard any ugly whispers."

"Tell me about him."

"He's a very exclusive fellow. Nobody can break his ice. And they say— But thunder, it's hardly square to let myself be pumped by a detective. I know no harm about the chap."

"He may be a poor devil, belied by those who ought to befriend him," interposed the officer.

"No, hang it! he's not that sort. Carries his nose a foot in the air, as if he didn't like the smell of a lawyer."

"You know me, Jack. I won't hurt him if he's honest. You don't want to screen him if he's a rogue. What's the man's name?"

"Jason Trueblood. That sounds honest."

"Yes; but there's not a man this side of Jericho that I'd care to buy on his name. It's mere risky than to buy butter without smelling it. What do they say of him, Jack?"

"Only that his lawyer's card here is a blind. He only pays us angel's visits, and usually has a call from some dubious-looking client. Poh, let it slide, Harry! I never retailed so much gossip before in my life. And likely the man's belied. Why, they might say the same thing of me. 'Not at home' is an old legend on my door. And it is likely my visitors may be talked about in the same fashion."

"You don't deal in the shady, I hope."

"Sporting friends sometimes look dubious. There was Brown Jim here yesterday, from Ausable, to tell me about a new trout run. The fellow might figure for a cutthroat. Then there was Smoky Bill, the guide— But this is terrible dry talk. Let us have in a pot of ale, or a bottle of sherry, if you prefer. Say what, Harry. Hang it, man, it's worth a hob-nob to see you."

"Put it off till a future time," answered Harry. "I'm on business to-day, Jack, and I never wet my lips when on duty. But I'll break that bottle of sherry with you yet. Where is Trueblood's office?"

"On the next floor. Third room back. But you won't find him in. It's not his hour. Come, let's have the pot of ale, at any rate."

"Much obliged. But not to-day."

The officer rose and shook the ashes from his pipe.

"Well, if you must. But it's a shame to leave me to my own company."

Jack rose and opened the door. As he did so a step was heard in the passage, and a slim young man passed the door, carrying himself very erect, and casting a brief, supercilious glance at the open door.

Mr. Keen, who stood somewhat in the background, started slightly as his eyes fell on this person. He made no movement toward the door, which Jack still held open. The latter turned with a look of intelligence as soon as the passer was out of hearing.

"Speak of the devil and he appears. That's Jason Trueblood. After him, Harry, if you want a closer look."

"There's no need," was the quiet answer. "One look is enough. There's a rascal's masquerade going on here, Jack, but I am not ready yet to pull off the mask. You can send

for that pot of ale. I'll crack it with you. My business for to-day is over."

"The deuce you say! Well, that's clever. I've got a good story that's burning to be told."

Leaving the two boon companions to make a day of it, over their pipes, their ale, and their stories, we must return to Jolly Jim, whom we left in a ticklish situation.

He was yet far from being out of danger, and Biddy Mulligan's exclamation was far too loud for safety in that dubious dwelling. But Jolly had neither hands, feet, nor tongue to warn her to silence. He might twirl his bare toes in warning, but that was a language he could hardly expect Biddy to understand.

Fortunately the girl herself took in the merits of the situation, after her first burst of surprise.

"Faix, an' they've trussed the lad up like a goose for the roastin' pan!" she exclaimed. "It's a mercy he's not kilt entirely. But how, forever, did he get down here?"

As she spoke she hastily removed the bandage from the boy's head, and the incumbrance from his mouth. Jolly had once more the freedom of his tongue, which he hastened to avail himself of.

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"I am beginning to get my eyes open, that's the truth," he remarked. "I did feel dreadfully at first, as you know, but I begin to fancy that I have been made a fool of. It is not so easy to pick up a girl in the streets of New York, and

not a sound, or a feather left to show what has become of her. There have been whispers abroad—"

"Yes. We have heard them," broke in the young man, eagerly.

"Ah! Let me hear from you, Howard. What have you heard?"

"Only that Miss Lucile Moreland was not as constant to Will Landers as he fancied. She was visited by George Wilson, whose reputation is not first-class. It is, at least, an odd coincidence that George Wilson vanished from the city at the same time that she disappeared. A very odd coincidence."

"Ha! Is that really said?"

Will dropped his paper-knife, and straightened himself up in his chair.

"Do you believe it, Will?" It was the young lady that asked this question.

"I have done my best to find her, Sadie," he replied. "The police cannot discover a sign of any abduction, and begin to hint at some other solution of the mystery."

"Do you believe that she has eloped with George Wilson?" she persisted.

He hesitated for a moment, tapping his fingers uneasily on the table.

"I would have cut the man's throat that hinted such a thing ten days ago," he began, in hesitating tones. "But I have had time to cool off. Between us all I never really loved Lucile. I tried to make myself believe that I did, but I see now that it was only make believe. I therefore can consider the matter calmly, and not with a lover's wildness."

"I always thought your love had a shadow of interest in it," remarked the young man, with a meaning look at Will.

"No insinuations, Howard, if you please. I was tied hand and foot, that you well know. I had to make a virtue of necessity; it was to marry this girl, or be a beggar. If only inclination had attended duty!" He sighed, as his eyes fell on the young lady before him with a look of tender admiration.

She drew up her stately form, while her face seemed full of haughty pride.

"I would not have thought you so mercenary," she coldly remarked.

"You have never known what it is to be between two fires," he eagerly rejoined. "Duty pulling one way; inclination the other. I was commanded to love the girl, and tried my best to obey. But it is not easy to control love." The look he cast on the young lady told more than his words.

"What is the use of beating about the bush?" broke in Howard, heartlessly. "Lucile has absconded with another lover, and you are free. She has forfeited her claim to the estate."

Will looked doubtfully at his two visitors. The same scornful look was upon the young lady's face.

"I can hardly believe it," he began. "She was so sweet, tender and pure-hearted. If it be so—"

"Well, if it be so?" asked Sadie, in cold accents.

Whatever answer Will might have given was lost. There came a knock at the door that broke the current of the conversation.

"Come in," he called.

It was a servant who opened the door.

"There is a—a person to see you, Mr. Landers."

"A person?"

"Yes, sir; a—not a gentleman. I have left him in the library."

"You had better have left him in the street. I have no business with persons who are not gentlemen. No matter; I will see what the fellow wants. Tell him to wait."

The servant withdrew, somewhat abashed.

"A beggar of some shape, I suppose," remarked Will. "A book-agent, likely."

"We must be going, at any rate," rejoined Howard. "We did not think to stay so long."

"Do not hurry. My unknown visitor can wait."

They insisted on going, however. Will accompanied them to the door, from which Howard walked out first. Sadie hung back, in obedience to a touch from Will's finger upon her hand.

"You are angry with me," he whispered.

"Not quite angry," she replied; "but—"

"But consider, Sadie. You know that I did not love Lucile. You know why this match hung like a heavy weight around my neck. You know—" he caught her hand, and looked earnestly into her eyes. "It is you that has bewitched me! Could I love another, and you upon the earth? I, to whom the touch of your lips is heaven itself?"

"Have done, Will," she coldly began, drawing herself proudly away from his attempted embrace. Then, as if moved by a second thought, she yielded, and suffered him to impress a kiss upon her unresponsive lips.

With a brief "good-night," she followed Howard, and heard the door close behind her. For some paces they walked silently together, side by side.

"Well?" at length said Howard, in a questioning tone.

"I despise myself!" she hotly burst out. "And I almost hate him!" She dashed her hand fiercely across her lips. "I suffered him to kiss me!—ah! it tastes like a flower from a dead girl's grave!"

"Don't be a fool!" was the harsh response. "Suppose he is something of a puppy? It is the money you are after, girl; not the man. I thought better of your wit."

"Hush, Howard! Be careful what you say. I am not in the mood for your despicable worldly wisdom. I am a mercenary dupe, I know; but take care how you strain the traces."

She fell into a moody silence, from which her shrewd villain of a brother thought it best to arouse her.

Will Landers stood for a minute within the door, the prey of conflicting emotions.

"I am sorry I took that kiss," he muttered. "I know it was bitter as gall to her. She is proud as Lucifer, and hardly cares to hide her scorn. Hang me for a weak fool, but I could crawl to her feet and let her set them on my head. I am burning with passion for the girl, and I will have her at any price!"

He stood in the attitude in which she had left him for several minutes. Then he abruptly turned and walked back.

"Who can that man be?" he asked himself. "The one who ventured here the other day will hardly try it again. I fancy I cured him of that."

He opened the door of the library and brusquely entered. But he came to a sudden halt, and a look of hot anger passed over his face on seeing who awaited him. The man presented the ill-dressed, burly form, and the rude, ruffianly features of Bill Bates.

"Hell's fire! what brings you here?" exclaimed Will, fiercely, but in a suppressed tone. "Did I not tell you, to-day only, never to come—"

"Avast there, shipmate!" growled the ruffian, rudely interrupting. "Any port in a storm, is the sailor's maxim. Blast it all! do you s'pose I want to git you into trouble? But when the sails are in rags and the ship scuddin' afore a hurricane, do you think a sailor's goin' to be nice about his port? There's the devil to pay, and that's what fetches me here."

"What do you mean?" Will's flushed face grew pale as death. "If you have botched my— If you— Hang it, out with it! Tell your story! If you are playing on me I will choke you for a base hound!"

Bill laughed grimly at this threat. He felt his brawny throat.

"Jist try choakin' an oak log," he growled. "You mought find it safer. The bottom's dropped out, I say, and Bill Bates ain't no liar."

Will Landers dropped into a chair and clutched its sides until his knuckles grew white.

"Go on," he faintly ordered. "Let me hear your story."

"I'm desprate afeared we've been smelt out," began Bill. "Ther' was a knee-high kid browsin' round the shanty. We nipped his wool and clapped him into limbo, but somehow he gin' us the heel, and the very devil's bu'st loose. We've got to fake out with the baggage, and quicker nor greased lightnin', or the hull job goes by the board. That's the long and the short of it."

Will looked at the speaker with dilated eyes and puzzled face. He tried hard to make out his meaning, but it was all Greek to him.

"I don't know what the deuce you are talking about," he burst out, impatiently. "Can't you talk a little more like a Christian?"

"It wouldn't be easy fur me to talk like a Christian," laughed Bill. "The devil mought as easy try to play Pope. Anyhow, the boy was one of Harry Keen's spies. We cotched him smellin' round and laid him by in a brace of sailor's knots. How the blazes he got loose I don't see, but he's gone. If he's spry, the cops may be on us afore an hour."

Will by this time had got an inkling of his meaning. He trembled and grew paler. Were his schemes about to fail?

"You have let yourselves be tracked!" he angrily exclaimed. "Who is this boy? What are you dallying about? Do you know only one hidin'-place? Away with the girl at once!"

"In course we know a hidin'-place," answered Bill sturdily. "But we can't carry her off on our shoulders, and we ain't got no carriage, and no cash to hire one. You've been so thunderin' mean with us."

"I gave you all I agreed; I was to give no more until the job was secure."

"I'd have scragged the gal only you was so skittish 'bout it."

"No, no! She must not be harmed."

He fell into a deep thought, during which Bill stood looking harshly at his bloodless face.

"I have it!" cried Will eagerly. "You hurry to the corner of Fourth avenue and Fortieth streeth. I will come myself, with one of my own carriages. There are enough in this business now. I want no more in it. Hurry away! There is not a moment to lose!"

"Ay! ay!" answered Bill, but with no show of stirring.

"Well, why don't you go? What keeps you there like a stupid fool?"

"Not a step till you fork out. If you can't open yer purse, the job may go to the dogs."

"You're a fool! I will keep all my promises. Here!" He thrust a roll of notes into Bill's hand. "Off now, like lightning. I will take you up in ten minutes."

Hurrying Bill through the hall, where fortunately there were no servants, and out of the door, Will hastened back to his stables, which were situated on the rear of his house lot.

Not more than ten minutes had elapsed ere a closed carriage came driving furiously down Fortieth streeth. It came to a sharp halt at Fourth avenue, where Bill Bates stood waiting, as directed.

"Jump up here on the box!" cried the driver. It was the voice of Will Landers, but he wore a plain, coachman-like dress, and his fair features had suddenly grown swarthy. He was evidently in disguise.

Bill hastened to obey, and the mettled horses dashed away again, without need of the whip.

While these events were transpiring the youthful emissary of the detective was hurrying down town at the full speed of an "Elevated" train. Minutes were hours now, with Jolly Jim as well as with Will Landers, and the former was as eager as the latter.

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"Hush, Howard! Be careful what you say. I am not in the mood for your despicable worldly wisdom. I am a mercenary dupe, I know; but take care how you strain the traces."

She fell into a moody silence, from which her shrewd villain of a brother thought it best to arouse her.

Will Landers stood for a minute within the door, the prey of conflicting emotions.

"I am sorry I took that kiss," he muttered. "I know it was bitter as gall to her. She is proud as Lucifer, and hardly cares to hide her scorn. Hang me for a weak fool, but I could crawl to her feet and let her set them on my head. I am burning with passion for the girl, and I will have her at any price!"

He stood in the attitude in which she had left him for several minutes. Then he abruptly turned and walked back.

"Who can that man be?" he asked himself. "The one who ventured here the other day will hardly try it again. I fancy I cured him of that."

He opened the door of the library and brusquely entered. But he came to a sudden halt, and a look of hot anger passed over his face on seeing who awaited him. The man presented the ill-dressed, burly form, and the rude, ruffianly features of Bill Bates.

"Hell's fire! what brings you here?" exclaimed Will, fiercely, but in a suppressed tone. "Did I not tell you, to-day only, never to come—"

"Avast there, shipmate!" growled the ruffian, rudely interrupting. "Any port in a storm, is the sailor's maxim. Blast it all! do you s'pose I want to git you into trouble? But when the sails are in rags and the ship scuddin' afore a hurricane, do you think a sailor's goin' to be nice about his port? There's the devil to pay, and that's what fetches me here."

"What do you mean?" Will's flushed face grew pale as death. "If you have botched my— If you— Hang it, out with it! Tell your story! If you are playing on me I will choke you for a base hound!"

Bill laughed grimly at this threat. He felt his brawny throat.

"Jist try choakin' an oak log," he growled. "You mought find it safer. The bottom's dropped out, I say, and Bill Bates ain't no liar."

Will Landers dropped into a chair and clutched its sides until his knuckles grew white.

"Go on," he faintly ordered. "Let me hear your story."

"I'm desprate afeared we've been smelt out," began Bill. "Ther' was a knee-high kid browsin' round the shanty. We nipped his wool and clapped him into limbo, but somehow he gin' us the heel, and the very devil's bu'st loose. We've got to fake out with the baggage, and quicker nor greased lightnin', or the hull job goes by the board. That's the long and the short of it."

Will looked at the speaker with dilated eyes and puzzled face. He tried hard to make out his meaning, but it was all Greek to him.

"I don't know what the deuce you are talking about," he burst out, impatiently. "Can't you talk a little more like a Christian?"

"It wouldn't be easy fur me to talk like a Christian," laughed Bill. "The devil mought as easy try to play Pope. Anyhow, the boy was one of Harry Keen's spies. We cotched him smellin' round and laid him by in a brace of sailor's knots. How the blazes he got loose I don't see, but he's gone. If he's spry, the cops may be on us afore an hour."

Will by this time had got an inkling of his meaning. He trembled and grew paler. Were his schemes about to fail?

"You have let yourselves be tracked!" he angrily exclaimed. "Who is this boy? What are you dallying about? Do you know only one hidin'-place? Away with the girl at once!"

"In course we know a hidin'-place," answered Bill sturdily. "But we can't carry her off on our shoulders, and we ain't got no carriage, and no cash to hire one. You've been so thunderin' mean with us."

"I gave you all I agreed; I was to give no more until the job was secure."

"I'd have scragged the gal only you was so skittish 'bout it."

"No, no! She must not be harmed."

He fell into a deep thought, during which Bill stood looking harshly at his bloodless face.

"I have it!" cried Will eagerly. "You hurry to the corner of Fourth avenue and Fortieth streeth. I will come myself, with one of my own carriages. There are enough in this business now. I want no more in it. Hurry away! There is not a moment to lose!"

"Ay! ay!" answered Bill, but with no show of stirring.

"Well, why don't you go? What keeps you there like a stupid fool?"

"Not a step till you fork out. If you can't open yer purse, the job may go to the dogs."

"You're a fool! I will keep all my promises. Here!" He thrust a roll of notes into Bill's hand. "Off now, like lightning. I will take you up in ten minutes."

Hurrying Bill through the hall, where fortunately there were no servants, and out of the door, Will hastened back to his stables, which were situated on the rear of his house lot.

Not more than ten minutes had elapsed ere a closed carriage came driving furiously down Fortieth streeth. It came to a sharp halt at Fourth avenue, where Bill Bates stood waiting, as directed.

"Jump up here on the box!" cried the driver. It was the voice of Will Landers, but he wore a plain, coachman-like dress, and his fair features had suddenly grown swarthy. He was evidently in disguise.

Bill hastened to obey, and the mettled horses dashed away again, without need of the whip.

While these events were transpiring the youthful emissary of the detective was hurrying down town at the full speed of an "Elevated" train. Minutes were hours now, with Jolly Jim as well as with Will Landers, and the former was as eager as the latter.

Leaving the train at a down-town station, the boy sprang into a street car for the East river side. It was now deep night. The gas lamps were blazing in every street. Crowds of pleasure seekers hurried along all the important thoroughfares. But there were fewer people in the streets along which Jolly hastened after leaving the car. It was not far away from his destination, and he ran along as rapidly as possible.

In less than ten minutes he had gained the corner of the desired street. He looked down the dark and deserted avenue. Before the door of the house from which he had so lately escaped stood a carriage. Some men were on the pavement. Jolly quick eyes saw that they were carrying something dark, and apparently heavy, which at that instant they thrust into the carriage.

The boy stood for a moment irresolute. It was too late to give an alarm, for they would be far away ere he could get aid. In fact, at that moment, one man sprang into the carriage, and two others mounted the box. It rolled away at a quick pace toward where he stood.

Jolly supported himself against a tree, thinking at lightning speed. The carriage was opposite him. A glance showed him that it was a gentleman's carriage, with a step for a footman behind.

Wasting no more time in thought Jolly sprang nimbly into the street. In an instant more he was safely mounted on this secure place of refuge, and was being whirled rapidly down the street.

A laugh came from the boy's lips as the mettled animals dashed along. They might run as fast as they would, but they could not shake him from his perch. He crowed with triumph, to feel how he had countermarched on the villains.

Street after street was passed through. They had gained several miles from their starting-point, and were now rolling, less rapidly, along a quiet up-town avenue.

"Drive ahead, cronies," said Jolly to himself. "You can't leave the wheels behind, nor you can't no better leave Jolly Jim."

At this moment a sharp swirl of the whip took the boy across the neck. It was so sudden and unlooked-for that in his start of dismay he lost his foothold, and hung suspended only by his hands.

A second surge of the long lashed whip struck

his wrists. The pain was so sharp that his grip involuntarily loosened, and he fell headlong on the hard-paved street, while the carriage hastened on.

Scrambling to his feet, the boy looked disconsolately after the vehicle, which was rapidly increasing the distance. He saw the driver looking back at him, and heard a taunting laugh.

What to do he knew not. It was useless to pursue, and equally useless to give an alarm. He stood like a statue, his eyes wildly following the vehicle.

"He knowed I was there all the time, shoot him!" ejaculated the boy. "He was jist letting me git easy afore he swiped me. Oh my! ain't I a nice carrier pigeon! I'm half afeared to show myself afore Mr. Keen."

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CHAPTER IX. LOOKING FOR SIGN.

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"Dunno what I'd best do; ship aboard a vessel fur the East Indies, or streak out fur Chicago. It's too confounded, ridik'lous thin, and I'm afeared to tell Mr. Keen 'bout my home run at base-ball. But then there's that poor gal! What's to come of her if I giv up the job?"

His soliloquy ended by his turning on his heel, and hurrying back toward the point from which he had lately started. Reaching the street in question it was to find it unusually quiet and deserted. Not a soul was visible.

"Where in thunder is the officers?" he muttered, as he moved toward the house. "They oughter been here half an hour ago."

On coming in front of the house he perceived that its street door stood open, and just then a person made his appearance from within. It was Harry Keen.

"Hey, Jolly!" he cried. "Just here you lazy young rat? Where have you been? And how about all the pretty story you told me? This house is as empty as a sailor's conscience."

"Jist as I 'spected," answered Jolly, sturdily. "I knowed they'd slide. They 'preciate the sort o' cove I am. Ain't I been chasin' 'em, like a hawk arter a rabbit? But they doubled on me jist the wust way you ever see'd."

"How was that? Out with your story, if you have one."

Jolly proceeded to relate his adventure, dwelling particularly on his sharpness in mounting behind the carriage, but with very little to say about the episode of the whip. That was a part of the programme that he would have preferred to leave out of the performance.

Harry Keen, and one or two others who had now come from the house, burst into laughter at Jolly's misfortune, or rather at his way of telling it.

"We're dished for this time. That's the long and short of it," remarked the detective. "They have not left a shadow in the house. And they dropped frienl Jolly to kiss the cobble stones. There's the whole affair in a nut-shell. We had best all streak home to our virtuous beds, for this night's work is done. To-morrow we can set out to track the villains."

But to-morrow and many another to-morrow came and passed, and they remained untracked. A month slowly glided by, during which all the resources of the police department were vainly applied to the purpose of tracing the abducted girl. The villains had disappeared and left no trace behind. Bill Bates was known no more in his favorite haunts. Adam and Jerry had vanished from sight. No longer were their white hats and nobby ties to be seen around the "Drinker's Paradise." Joe, the tenant of the house in which Lucile had been confined, had also disappeared. Jolly, to whom these persons were best known, scoured the New York streets, and places of resort, pretty thoroughly, but without a glimpse of any of these badly wanted persons.

"Maybe you'd best advertise for 'em!" he suggested to Harry Keen. "Jist say they'll hear of somethin' to their 'vantage if they turn up. That mought fotch 'em."

"Are you tryin' to poke fun at me, you little rascal?" asked Harry.

"Nary time. I'm jist in airnest," answered Jolly, very demurely.

"All right. Will you foot the bill for the advertising, if they don't come to time?"

"Dunno what you take me fur," laughed Jolly. "Guess I'll indulge in one o' my Havanners. Ain't goin' into no sich speculations jist now." He lit one of his cigar stumps, and puffed away with an air of intense satisfaction.

"Hang me if I was ever so badly dished in my life," declared Harry, striking the table impatiently with his fist. "Spies are of no account. Landers is as quiet as a mouse, and the others have sunk like rats into their holes. The girl is hid in some place north of the city, I fancy. The carriage came back in three hours after dropping you off. But where she is remains a mystery."

The boy was industriously puffing away at his cigar, looking as wise as an owl.

"Won't they git uneasy, and leave the'r holes arter while, Mr. Keen?" he asked.

"Very likely. That is how the cat generally jumps. We have only to keep quiet and wide awake."

"Them English sports 'll be nosin' round, if ther's any sport goin'," suggested Jolly.

"A good idea," replied Harry. "It might be well to have an eye on the races. And there's a big rowing match next week. How would you like to take that in?"

"Fust rate!" ejaculated the boy, with a look of delight. "I'm a hoss on sport. And won't I spot Mr. Adam and Jerry if they poke around? Maybe I won't then?"

A few days after this conversation the detective found himself again in Jack Prime's office. The latter individual was still at home, and as deep in the pages of a very thin yellow-covered "law book" as before.

"Don't be squinting at this, Harry," he exclaimed. "It's only relaxation after hard labor. You don't know the big things I have been putting through. Thomson versus Blank. That's jist settled. A regular scorcher that was. You should have seen me putting in the left-handers. And won it in a breeze. Big verdict for my client. Costs and damages, you rogue."

"That's good, Jack. Heavy damages, eh? I am glad to see you getting down to work at last. And big suits, too. How much did your client get?"

"Thirty-seven dollars and forty-two cents," remarked Jack, with immense dignity.

"The deuce!" and Harry burst out laughing. "That's your idea of a big verdict, eh?"

"It isn't bad for upsetting a candy-stand in a street frolic," replied Jack, gravely. "The price is big for the job. That's what I mean. By the seven saints, Hal, I wish I was well out of this. They say that deer are running in the Adirondacks, and it's confounded hard for a chap to be kept here when there's good sport afloat. You'll come here some day and find me gone, slid, like a greased sleigh-runner on a snow-bank."

"You are an uneasy wretch," laughed Harry. "By the way, have you seen anything of Trueblood lately?"

"Not I. Nor anybody else about here. They say he hasn't shown his handsome face for the past month. 'Not at home' is glued to his office door."

"I wish you would keep an eye open still."

"Not a hair of an eyelid," answered Jack, firmly. "I don't still hunt. I must see my game before I try to run it down. Tell me who is masquerading as Trueblood, or carry your wares to some oth'r market."

"I can trust you with a secret?"

"If you can't, keep it yourself."

"I am not afraid of you, Jack. But it is a matter of importance. The man's real name is Will Landers."

"Will Landers! The deuce!" ejaculated Jack, with a loud whistle.

"Do you know him?"

"There are queer stories afloat, that's all. I heard them at the club a few nights ago. Of course I need not tell you the tale of the disappearance of Landers's lady-love, and the supposed abduction. But it is hinted now that the abduction was a mere blind, and that the girl has run away with some old lover. And that is not all. It is hinted that Landers himself set the story afloat, and that he is sweet upon some other girl."

"What do you think of it, Jack?"

"That he ought to be kicked, for a low-born hound!"

"He ought to be locked up for a villain," returned Harry. "I have a fancy that he managed that abduction himself, and his masquerading here as Trueblood is part of the game. He does not want his rascally agents at his house."

"I see, I see!" cried Jack. "A neat little scheme, my faith. And that's why he is floating the story that the girl has absconded with some old lover? Blast him, I'd like to pink him at forty paces! Why don't you snatch him, and be done with it?"

"No. That would be to throw all our fat into the fire. The girl must be rescued first; and if he fancies himself suspected, she may be put securely out of the way."

"Deuced underhanded schemers you are," returned Jack. "You make a fellow shiver. It is my plan to hit straight out wherever I see a head. Who is the man that is charged with carrying off the girl? I did not get the name."

"He is a fast-living fellow, who has been paying her some attentions. A lively, brisk chap. He disappeared at the same time that she did, and has not been heard of since."

"What is his name?"

"George Wilson."

"What?" and Jack sprung up in surprise.

"George Wilson. Do you know him?"

"I should think I did!" He burst into a loud laugh. "I should rather fancy that I've heard the name before. So this is the terrible damsel-stealer, eh?"

"Yes. Out with it, Jack. What is it? Do you know where the man is?"

"Couldn't swear for him now no more than I could swear for the musketo that stung me yesterday. But it is not a week since he and I were trolling the head-waters of the Maranac. You should have seen the trout he landed. Hang me, if there isn't a cursed libel afloat here! Wilson is out on a summer's sport. And because he chooses to dive out of sight of civilization, they raise the rascally story. I'll settle that in short meter for the next man that retails it in my hearing."

"Take my advice and keep quiet," warned Harry. "Let the villain fancy that his match has caught. I want to throw him utterly off his guard. He has been too sharp for me yet; but he shall wake up to find that there is a sleuth-hound on his track."

On the detective's return to his office, he found Jim awaiting him. The latter free-and-easy young gentleman was seated on a chair-back, and trying his best to make said chair stand on two legs. The entrance of the officer put an end to the experiment, for the chair toppled over, and Master Jim rolled like a hedge-hog over the floor.

"What the deuce are you at?" cried the officer, sharply.

"I'd had it done if you'd kept away five seconds more, that's all," answered Jim, in a tone of indignation. "I'm bound to make that old chair stand on two legs, or split."

"You are, eh? And what brings you here? Any news?"

"Nothin', except that Nimble won the 2:20 stakes like a breeze. You jist oughter seen him diggin' up ground."

"Never mind that. About your men, I mean. Did they put in an appearance?"

"Not much. If they did I wouldn't be talkin' 'bout hoss-races and sich truck."

Their conversation was interrupted, after a few minutes more, by the opening of the door and the entrance of Will Landers. There were some symptoms of uneasiness about him, and his face was slightly flushed. But the detective met him with a quiet politeness, and a countenance devoid of all expression.

"Take a seat, Mr. Landers. Rather a warm day."

"Very." He wiped the perspiration from his face. "I have not heard from you lately, Mr. Keen. How goes the search?"

"Slowly. I don't wish to discourage you, sir, but it is a knotty case. I begin to doubt that the girl is hidden in New York."

"Have you heard the story that has got afloat—nobody knows how?" Mr. Landers again wiped his brow. "People begin to hint that it is not an abduction, but that Lucile was quite willing to be run away with."

"And what do you think of it?" asked the officer, quietly.

"I would rather have your opinion. I am not in a frame of mind for any reasonable judgment."

"If you wish my private opinion I must say that the notion looks plausible. Don't be offended, Mr. Landers. I will keep up the search, if you wish. But it begins to look like chasing a Will-of-the-wisp."

Despite himself Mr. Landers looked relieved.

"I cannot believe it," he ejaculated. "That Lucile—my poor Lucile—And yet, as you say, it looks plausible. I cannot tell what to

his wrists. The pain was so sharp that his grip involuntarily loosened, and he fell headlong on the hard-paved street, while the carriage hastened on.

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think. Of course you will keep up the search. And yet it seems almost useless."

"Guess you don't know what kind of hair-pins we is!" began Jolly, jumping up in great indignation. "You don't s'pose—" At this point he caught a warning sign from Mr. Keen. He hesitated an instant, and then continued: "You don't s'pose we're goin' to spend the rest of our lives huntin' needles in hay-stacks? Mr. Keen and me has got other bizness than that."

Jolly punched his hat fiercely on his head, and stalked across the room.

A few minutes more of conversation followed, and then Mr. Landers took his departure, remarking:

"I leave it all in your hands, sir. Follow it up if you think it of any use. I am puzzled to know what to think."

When he had gone the detective turned to Jolly.

"Come, young fellow, you haven't learned the art of holding your tongue yet, it seems. You came near letting the cat out of the bag."

"Anyhow, I pushed it back again, head and shoulders," replied the boy. "He got my temper up, that's a fact, fur a white-livered tarrier. Dunno how you keep so cool, Mr. Keen."

"That's part of my business," was the answer. "The villain thinks he has thoroughly shut my eyes, and that I will be likely to drop the search. Let him keep on thinking so. That is just what I want."

"We're sharp ones, you and me, 'specially me," answered Jolly, with a queer grimace.

CHAPTER X.

HIGH LIFE IN THE KITCHEN.

WITH the novelist's privilege to make long jumps of time and place, we must now lead the reader to a new locality. Nor is it to some palatial drawing-room, with the shimmer of satins and the flash of jewels, that we propose to wander, but to a homely kitchen, where the only shimmer is that of tin pans, and the flash that of a warm firelight. As for the tenants of this kitchen they are not high-born lords and ladies, but pretty Biddy Mulligan, in her plain print dress and check apron, and saucy Jolly Jim, in his well-ventilated attire and his broken-brimmed straw hat.

It may look as if we lack taste, to seek a scene like this, when all the parlors of the land are open to us, and we are able to step into kings' palaces without saying "by your leave." But a truce to the high and mighty, it is plain folks with whom we have to deal, and we would not just now step an inch from our path to bow to a duke.

Jolly had kept his word to not forget his friend in the kitchen. He had been taken by her pretty face and lively tongue, and by the service she had done him on a memorable occasion. He is now seated astride a chair, with his fists on the back and his chin on his fists, watching with interested eyes the quick movement of her fingers, as she practices the old-fashioned art of "shelling peas."

"I never see'd anybody as could make 'em hop out o' their pods like you," he remarked in admiration. "The peas ain't got a ghost of a chance when you git arter 'em."

"Away wid your blarney now!" she cried, " afore I fling a handful in your face to tache you sense."

"There's no lie in it, anyhow," answered the boy. "And you know that, too."

"It's a nate young flatterer you are, and well I know that. And it don't take a janus to get pays out o' their shells. Sure there's nothing 'asier."

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"Anyhow, you're well fixed here," he suggested. "It's as neat as a pin here, and lashins of pervisions laying round loose."

"And if it's nate, who made it nate, will you tell me? Me own fingers and toes maybe. They're much too nate, Jolly. They want me to kape the whole house like a new pin. And if I happen to swape a trifle o' dust intill a corner and I l'ave it there, you never heered such a blather. It's goin' to l'ave I am. I've advertised for a new situation this very day. And I'd like to put in it as I want a place wid people as ain't over nate; only I'm afear'd they'd be prejudiced. Folks is so quare in this country."

"Don't furgit to write to me when you git a new place," remarked the boy. "You've got my directions. And I don't want to lose sight of swate Biddy Mulligan."

"Away wid you, you blarneyin' omadhoun!" cried Biddy, making a pass at him with the cabbage stalk. "Away for a little rogue as you are, and don't be comin' round me wid your soft spaches, or I'll be after t'achin' you better manners."

Jolly ran laughing away from the reach of her weapon.

"Good-by, Biddy," he cried. "I must be goin'. Don't forgit to write."

We will not say that Biddy was not vexed with his flattery. But she smiled and showed her white teeth in a fashion that angry people are not much given to.

Jolly walked gayly down the street, still laughing.

"She's a mighty pretty gal, is Biddy," he said to himself. "And I s'pose it ain't all high water in the kitchen. Folks kinder want to hire angels at three dollars a week."

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But he did not lose sight of business in his thirst for pleasure, but kept a weather eye open as he made his way through the groups of talkers and betters. There were few present that escaped the inspection of Jolly's keen eyes.

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"Guess you don't know what kind of hair-pins we is!" began Jolly, jumping up in great indignation. "You don't s'pose—" At this point he caught a warning sign from Mr. Keen. He hesitated an instant, and then continued: "You don't s'pose we're goin' to spend the rest of our lives huntin' needles in hay-stacks? Mr. Keen and me has got other bizness than that."

Jolly punched his hat fiercely on his head, and stalked across the room.

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"I leave it all in your hands, sir. Follow it up if you think it of any use. I am puzzled to know what to think."

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CHAPTER X.

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It may look as if we lack taste, to seek a scene like this, when all the parlors of the land are open to us, and we are able to step into kings' palaces without saying "by your leave." But a truce to the high and mighty, it is plain folks with whom we have to deal, and we would not just now step an inch from our path to bow to a duke.

Jolly had kept his word to not forget his friend in the kitchen. He had been taken by her pretty face and lively tongue, and by the service she had done him on a memorable occasion. He is now seated astride a chair, with his fists on the back and his chin on his fists, watching with interested eyes the quick movement of her fingers, as she practices the old-fashioned art of "shelling peas."

"I never see'd anybody as could make 'em hop out o' their pods like you," he remarked in admiration. "The peas ain't got a ghost of a chance when you git arter 'em."

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"And is that why you left?"

"Not jist that. I told 'em to l'ave the kitchen, and they left. Maybe I gave 'em a thrifle o' the sharp edge o' my tongue, too. It's not 'asy always to kape your temper. But there was wuss than that. Would you belave it, when they come to pay me my well-earned wages they took out for a slight bit of accidents, as no dacent folks would ha' thought of twice? Could I help it if the fire split the stove-plate, or a flat-iron fell on the fryin'-pan? And s'pose the coffee-pot did git a drop, and set to leakin'? Them's things as will be after happenin'. And is a poor girl to pay 'cause her fingers ain't iron hooks, or stickin' glue, to hold on to ten things to once?"

"You don't say as they charged you for sich trifles?" exclaimed Jolly.

"Indade, and they did then! I threatened to have the law of them. And I would only I'm so p'aceful. But I discharged 'em on the spot. I'd felt meself mane, if I'd stayed after sich treatment."

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so, and wid the wide seas betwixt her and home. But sorry the bit o' use was it all. Them as won't see can't see, and words is all waste on the like."

Jim laughed covertly at Biddy's indignation. He was shrewd enough to see that there was another side to the story, but did not think it wise to contradict his friend of the kitchen.

"And is that all?" he asked. "Or did you live in more places?"

"A slather of 'em," she replied. "But it's the same old tune wid 'em all. Ther's no plasin' them, do what you will. It's Biddy here and Biddy there. And it's missus pokin' her nose in the kitchen, and smellin' the pans to see if they've been washed. And it's mather kickin' up a row 'cause his best boots has got intill the ash barrel, when it was all a mistake for the old ones. And it's the young ladies givin' orders, as if a body could stand a regiment of missuses. And it's this, and it's that. It's 'Biddy, there's one of the silver spoons missin', and the lid's broke off of the taypot, and what's come of the mutton broth as was left over yisterday? Sure one would nade the patience of an angel to stand it, and that's more than Biddy Mulligan's got."

The boy laughed heartily at this free expression of opinion.

"Anyhow, you're well fixed here," he suggested. "It's as neat as a pin here, and lashins of pervisions laying round loose."

"And if it's nate, who made it nate, will you tell me? Me own fingers and toes maybe. They're much too nate, Jolly. They want me to kape the whole house like a new pin. And if I happen to swape a trifle o' dust intill a corner and I l'ave it there, you never heered such a blather. It's goin' to l'ave I am. I've advertised for a new situation this very day. And I'd like to put in it as I want a place wid people as ain't over nate; only I'm afear'd they'd be prejudiced. Folks is so quare in this country."

"Don't furgit to write to me when you git a new place," remarked the boy. "You've got my directions. And I don't want to lose sight of swate Biddy Mulligan."

"Away wid you, you blarneyin' omadhoun!" cried Biddy, making a pass at him with the cabbage stalk. "Away for a little rogue as you are, and don't be comin' round me wid your soft spaches, or I'll be after t'achin' you better manners."

Jolly ran laughing away from the reach of her weapon.

"Good-by, Biddy," he cried. "I must be goin'. Don't forgit to write."

We will not say that Biddy was not vexed with his flattery. But she smiled and showed her white teeth in a fashion that angry people are not much given to.

Jolly walked gayly down the street, still laughing.

"She's a mighty pretty gal, is Biddy," he said to himself. "And I s'pose it ain't all high water in the kitchen. Folks kinder want to hire angels at three dollars a week."

In following up the adventures of the easy-going youth we must jump over an interval of time and place, and take him to a famous race-course on Long Island, where some horses of noble pedigree were to be put on the track.

It was not the races that brought him here, however, but the hope of discovering the brace of sports, on whose track Harry Keen had placed him. Not that master Jolly was likely to throw the fun of a race behind him. He was not that kind of a boy, and he watched the swift trotting horses with a delight, and applauded with a vim, that no old roadster could have surpassed.

But he did not lose sight of business in his thirst for pleasure, but kept a weather eye open as he made his way through the groups of talkers and betters. There were few present that escaped the inspection of Jolly's keen eyes.

He walked around the course, on the inside of the ring, pushing into every group, and scanning every face. But so far it was in vain. The faces and attire he sought were not to be seen.

"Here they come!" cried enthusiastic voices, as a brace of horses turned the third quarter at a stunning pace, and thundered down the home stretch. "Side by side. Not an inch advantage."

"I'll go the odds on Pastor, for a pony!" cried an eager better.

"Done, on the brown horse," replied another member of the throng.

There was something familiar to the boy in the tone of this last speaker. He looked toward him. The man's face was turned away, and he

think. Of course you will keep up the search. And yet it seems almost useless."

"Guess you don't know what kind of hair-pins we is!" began Jolly, jumping up in great indignation. "You don't s'pose—" At this point he caught a warning sign from Mr. Keen. He hesitated an instant, and then continued: "You don't s'pose we're goin' to spend the rest of our lives huntin' needles in hay-stacks? Mr. Keen and me has got other bizness than that."

Jolly punched his hat fiercely on his head, and stalked across the room.

A few minutes more of conversation followed, and then Mr. Landers took his departure, remarking:

"I leave it all in your hands, sir. Follow it up if you think it of any use. I am puzzled to know what to think."

When he had gone the detective turned to Jolly.

"Come, young fellow, you haven't learned the art of holding your tongue yet, it seems. You came near letting the cat out of the bag."

"Anyhow, I pushed it back again, head and shoulders," replied the boy. "He got my temper up, that's a fact, fur a white-livered tarrier. Dunno how you keep so cool, Mr. Keen."

"That's part of my business," was the answer. "The villain thinks he has thoroughly shut my eyes, and that I will be likely to drop the search. Let him keep on thinking so. That is just what I want."

"We're sharp ones, you and me, 'specially me," answered Jolly, with a queer grimace.

CHAPTER X.

HIGH LIFE IN THE KITCHEN.

WITH the novelist's privilege to make long jumps of time and place, we must now lead the reader to a new locality. Nor is it to some palatial drawing-room, with the shimmer of satins and the flash of jewels, that we propose to wander, but to a homely kitchen, where the only shimmer is that of tin pans, and the flash that of a warm firelight. As for the tenants of this kitchen they are not high-born lords and ladies, but pretty Biddy Mulligan, in her plain print dress and check apron, and saucy Jolly Jim, in his well-ventilated attire and his broken-brimmed straw hat.

It may look as if we lack taste, to seek a scene like this, when all the parlors of the land are open to us, and we are able to step into kings' palaces without saying "by your leave." But a truce to the high and mighty, it is plain folks with whom we have to deal, and we would not just now step an inch from our path to bow to a duke.

Jolly had kept his word to not forget his friend in the kitchen. He had been taken by her pretty face and lively tongue, and by the service she had done him on a memorable occasion. He is now seated astride a chair, with his fists on the back and his chin on his fists, watching with interested eyes the quick movement of her fingers, as she practices the old-fashioned art of "shelling peas."

"I never see'd anybody as could make 'em hop out o' their pods like you," he remarked in admiration. "The peas ain't got a ghost of a chance when you git arter 'em."

"Away wid your blarney now!" she cried, " afore I fling a handful in your face to tache you sense."

"There's no lie in it, anyhow," answered the boy. "And you know that, too."

"It's a nate young flatterer you are, and well I know that. And it don't take a janus to get pays out o' their shells. Sure there's nothing 'asier."

"But it does me good to see your fingers twinkle among 'em, like butterflies among daisies," replied Jolly, his eyes full of humor.

This high-flavored compliment was a little more than Biddy could stand. She flung a handful of the empty pods at the boy, with such sure aim as to spread them over his face from his chin to his eyes.

"There! take that fur your imperdence. And thank your stars it wasn't the full pods I flung. Pick them up now and be done with your nonsense. It's an oily-tongued boy you are, and you can belave me when I say it."

Jolly laughed as he obediently picked up the scattered pods.

"Guess we're 'bout even, Biddy," he said. "If we wasn't I'd giv you a dose of pea-pods to remember me by."

They chattered on in this fashion for some minutes more, Jolly as thoroughly at home as if he had been Miss Bridget's acknowledged "company."

"And where have you been kapin' yerself?" she at length asked. "It's little of you I've

seen since that quare night in the kitchen, when you come slidin' down stairs like a tied-up turkey."

"Bizness, Biddy," he answered, with an air of importance. "I'll tell you all 'bout it some time. And haven't I looked fur you more nor once, to find that you'd jist slid? Why, you've been changin' places oftener than a Coney Isl. and swell changes his neck-ties. May be you're goin' to git up a servant gal's directory, and are tryin' all the places first."

"Sure and a saint hisself couldn't live wid some of the pape!" ejaculated Biddy. "You never see'd the loike o' the folks. It's most worried to death I've been wid 'em. And I'm 'asy to plase, so you can stop your grinnin'."

"Go ahead, Biddy," cried the fun-loving boy. "Let's hear all 'bout it. What sort o' folks have you been livin' with?"

"What sort, is it? All sorts, sure. All I want is p'ace and quiet in me own kitchen, and a thrifle o' fair wages, and not too much work. That ain't axin' much now, but it's scarce to be found. Why the parlor folks want to ate the whole herrin', and I've only the tail for the girl in the kitchen."

"Go ahead. Where did you go arter we waltzed away from Jos's?"

"Where did I go?" Biddy laid aside her peas, and commenced to slice a head of cabbage. "That was the child's nuss place, for a young couple as had plenty of money, but no sense in the world. You'd ha' thought the little darlint was made o' sugar candy, at laste. S'pose I did let little wax-head fall? Sorra bit the wuss he was for it. Yet if I'd killed him twice over there couldn't have been a bigger pother."

"And they discharged you for that?"

"I discharged them," corrected Biddy, with dignity. "They were too un'rasonable for my likin'. Arter that I got intill a family as I thought at first was goin' to be all pinks and roses. But they turned out just as un'rasonable as t'others, and all because I nicked the chiny in the dish-pan. You'd ha' thought that chiny was children, and that a slip off a tay-cup was as bad as a sliver off a baby's nose. Didn't I explain to 'em as how it got nicked itself, and no soul could stop it? But little use was words. You couldn't no more convince 'em than if you was talkin' Dutch to a Chineese. Never the stay would I stay in that house arter that, and I smashed a whole panfull of chiny to tache 'em sense."

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"I'll go the odds on Pastor, for a pony!" cried an eager better.

"Done, on the brown horse," replied another member of the throng.

There was something familiar to the boy in the tone of this last speaker. He looked toward him. The man's face was turned away, and he

saw only a thick-set person, of middle height, and dressed in a plain brown suit.

"Don't know him, anyhow," thought Jolly, as he again gave his attention to the race.

Down came the horses neck to neck. But as they came close it was seen that the brown had the cleanest pace, and was slowly gaining. A minute more and they thundered past the winning stand, the brown a head and neck in advance. The favorite Pastor had been beaten.

In the midst of the shouts at the termination of the race, Jolly caught the sound of that familiar voice again.

"I'll rake down that little bet, if you please. The brown sweeps the field."

The boy looked quickly around. The face of the speaker was now turned toward him. With a start of surprise and satisfaction he recognized that countenance at a glance. It presented the well-marked features of the man whom he knew only as Jerry, the English sport.

"I knowed it," said Jolly to himself in delight. "I knowed he couldn't keep away from the races. Puttin' on that mournin' rig to shut up folks' eyes! Can't fool Jolly Jim with any sich old trick. Maybe you've won on the brown, but I've a notion you've lost on the white, for if you git out o' sight of my eyes ag'in I hope somebody 'll chop off my ears, or kick me into the middle of next week for a played-out donkey."

CHAPTER XI.

THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

"NAILED, fur a roasin' pig!" cried Jolly Jim in delight. He had just trailed Jerry, the sport, into a low-browed house, in Center street, New York. "The chap ain't got no more wit nor a cow. Thinks 'cause he's put on a plain coat, and chopped off his mustache, that nobody 'll know him, and that he kin flirt round like a bee in a 'lasses barrel. He didn't know the sort o' rooster as was on his track."

The boy took a careful survey of the house, to make sure of knowing it again, and then walked slowly away. He was in doubt just what to do.

"Know that shanty?" he asked a policeman. "That 'un with the brown door and the green windows."

"It's a good place to keep out of, for men with full pockets," answered the officer.

Jim opened his eyes.

"Tain't a crazy 'sylum, nor nothin' o' that sort, hey?"

"No. It is not a place where men go in crazy and come out cured, but where they go in wise and come out wandering. It's a sweat house."

"And what's a sweat house?" asked the boy, for once puzzled.

"Thought I'd catch you there," laughed the officer. "A gambling hole, I mean. A place for men to sweat away all their gold and silver."

"Oho!" cried the boy. "That's the wrinkle, hey? Bet they don't sweat out any of my money soon."

"Don't be too sure," answered the officer. "You're a boy yet, but you'll soon be a man; and you're smart, but you'll find folks in there that are smarter. So look out, my lively pigeon, for your wings."

"They can't sweat blood out a stone, or roast parsnips outa boilin' water," returned Jim, with a grin. "You could stick all the money I've got in a 'skeeter's eye, and it wouldn't make him wink."

An hour afterward found the boy still on guard over the house. He was not satisfied with trailing Jerry to a gambling house, where he was likely getting rid of his winnings in the race. It was necessary to track him further, and nail him in his domicile.

The gamin could be patient enough with a good object, but he growled a little as the long minutes rolled by, and no Jerry appeared.

"Kinder long-winded, he is. Got a full pocket, maybe, and lectin' it out slow. He'll git warped, though. They all git warped.—Here he comes now. I knowen it. He's got the marks in his face. Been buckin' the tiger, and got a rip from his claws."

The shrewd young spy put himself on the track of the melancholy-looking sport. Jerry was not in the mood to be watchful, and walked gloomily on, quite heedless of pursuit.

At a somewhat later hour the law/er, Jack Prime, walked into the office of Harry Keen, his detective friend.

"How do, Hal?" he asked, helping himself to a chair. "How goes that job you were telling me of? The Landers' scheme?"

"Deep as ever. Don't see daylight ahead

yet. What happy wind blew you here, Jack? Try a cigar. Here are some first chop Yaras. Wait a half minute. I have a dozen words yet to jot down."

Jack lit his cigar and settled himself comfortably. Clouds of smoke rolled like a fog about his head as he watched the quick movements of Harry's fingers.

"There. That job's done. Now, my lad, I'm free to talk religion, law, or politics. What's in the wind?"

"I saw Trueblood yesterday," announced Jack, puffing smoke easily from his lips. "He kindly gave us a call."

"Hal! That's interesting." Harry's attention was instantly aroused. "How was it? Did he meet visitors?"

"No.—That is a prime bit of the weed, Hal; and burns to a charm." He took the cigar from his lips, and admiringly inspected it.

"Deuce take it, that's no news! You needn't swing round the circle, Jack, as if you were deer-stalking. What did the man want? I see that you know."

"You are right there. He paid me the compliment of a special call. Wants me to act as his postman. He is afraid some of his letters will go astray in his absence, and has asked me to receive and hold them for him."

"Good! And you consented?"

"You wouldn't have me unneighborly?"

"And what are you going to do if letters come?"

"Keep them until called for," answered Jack calmly. "Did you suppose I would hand them over to you?"

"By all that's good, I'll get out a bench-warrant, and make you pass them into court!"

"Very good," laughed Jack. "I am a law-abiding citizen. But you must first satisfy me that this man is the rascal you imagine. Tell me the whole story."

He leaned back easily in his chair, and half-closed his eyes, as he prepared to take in the narrative.

"I have no objection to tell you what I know," answered the officer. "And I would be better satisfied if I knew more. It is near two months now since Lucile Moreland, a highly respectable young lady, suddenly disappeared. No one knows how. She left her house at a late hour one rainy evening on some sort of charitable errand. She has not been seen since. Landers came to me in great distress. She was his lady-love, it seems. Well, that's about all. We are as much in the dark now as we were at the beginning."

"But you suspect Landers of having some hand in the job?"

"I do. It was he instigated the girl to set out that night. He acknowledged as much. And what is more, Jack, I have been tracing this story of her running away with George Wilson. So far as I can discover, it started with Landers himself."

"That's all very n at," cried Jack impatiently. "But the motive? What has he to gain by it?"

"I see I must let you into the private history of Master Will Landers," replied the detective. "There's a deep spring that moves all this machinery. In the first place Lucile Moreland is his first cousin, and the match between them had more of interest than love in it. There's a family history behind it all. The fine estate that Mr. Landers enjoys is left to him only on conditions. Miss Moreland is as near an heir as he, and the will commands them to marry and share it together."

"Ah! I begin to see."

"If he will not have her he cannot have the estate. If she shows an inclination not to have him she loses her claim on the estate."

"I see."

"But she showed no such inclination. Master Will found it to his interest to court her, and she seemed quite willing to marry her handsome cousin."

"Then why the deuce didn't they marry, and be done with it?"

"Because the young scoundrel has fallen head over ears with somebody else. He is determined to have the property without the girl. The fact is he has been deeply smitten with a handsome, high-flying, fortune-hunting young lady who has turned the heads of a dozen young sprouts in her time. One Sadie Lawson. Do you know her?"

"Know her? Go on, Hal. Don't ask me my experience in that quarter. I am no ninny, yet it was near a bite. I don't wonder at Landers."

"You see my theory now. He has got up

this abduction to clear his track, and started the story of the George Wilson flight as proof that she, not he, has broken the will. He is equally in love with Miss Sadie and the estate; and poor Lucile must clear the way for his schemes."

"It is a plausible theory," rejoined Jack, with a thoughtful look. "But it may be all conjecture."

"I think not. There are other proofs."

He proceeded to detail the circumstances with which the reader is already familiar, including Jolly Jim's adventures.

"And the letter which Trueblood is expecting may contain the key to the mystery?"

"Exactly."

"Very well. If there is an order from the court for me to detain any letters that fall into my hands, I will not venture to disobey it. I am not going back of the law to please Jason Trueblood."

"There shall be such an order. If you fail to retain any such letter it will be at peril of life, limb and estate."

The laugh in which the two friends indulged was suddenly broken. The door of the office flew open with a crash, and in sprang Jolly Jim. The boy seemed beside himself, and indulged in a wild war dance that would have done credit to a Cherokee. He ended with a leap that landed him on the middle of the table, a shrill whoop, and a flit of his hat that came near bringing down the clock, from its shelf in the corner.

"What in the devil's name ails the boy?" cried Harry, as he caught Jolly by the collar and brought him with a quick lift to the floor. "What bee have you in your bonnet now, you little rascal?"

He shook the boy violently, as if seeking to shake a modicum of sense into his addled brain.

"Victory! victory!" cried Jolly, breaking loose from his hands. "I've got 'em nailed plastered, trimmed! They're salted, wuss nor any salt mackerel. Oh jiminy! but the thing is b'ilin hot!"

"Who is this young lunatic?" asked Jack in surprise.

"He is the boy spy I told you of. Come, Jolly, out with it."

But the shrewd lad looked at Jack, and hesitated.

"Go on. He is true blue. If you have any sense left, let me hear your story."

"There's more nor one story," cried the boy. "It's a double-barreled one, anyhow. First barrel, I've spotted one of my sports. The short, stout one, as calls hisself Jerry."

"Good. Where?"

"Took him up at the races. Done up in brown, he was, but I done him up browner. Tracked him to a Center street gambling hole; and then to a house on Marion street, which is where he shakes down his shingle, if I ain't sold."

"Shakes down his shingle?" queried Jack.

"Lives there, I mean. Draws his ham and buttermilk rations. That's the spot, anyhow. Thought I'd fotch you the news."

"A good day's work, Jolly. You had best keep up a watch upon the house. We may make a better haul by giving Jerry free play for a while."

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"You are right there. He paid me the compliment of a special call. Wants me to act as his postman. He is afraid some of his letters will go astray in his absence, and has asked me to receive and hold them for him."

"Good! And you consented?"

"You wouldn't have me unneighborly?"

"And what are you going to do if letters come?"

"Keep them until called for," answered Jack calmly. "Did you suppose I would hand them over to you?"

"By all that's good, I'll get out a bench-warrant, and make you pass them into court!"

"Very good," laughed Jack. "I am a law-abiding citizen. But you must first satisfy me that this man is the rascal you imagine. Tell me the whole story."

He leaned back easily in his chair, and half-closed his eyes, as he prepared to take in the narrative.

"I have no objection to tell you what I know," answered the officer. "And I would be better satisfied if I knew more. It is near two months now since Lucile Moreland, a highly respectable young lady, suddenly disappeared. No one knows how. She left her house at a late hour one rainy evening on some sort of charitable errand. She has not been seen since. Landers came to me in great distress. She was his lady-love, it seems. Well, that's about all. We are as much in the dark now as we were at the beginning."

"But you suspect Landers of having some hand in the job?"

"I do. It was he instigated the girl to set out that night. He acknowledged as much. And what is more, Jack, I have been tracing this story of her running away with George Wilson. So far as I can discover, it started with Landers himself."

"That's all very n at," cried Jack impatiently. "But the motive? What has he to gain by it?"

"I see I must let you into the private history of Master Will Landers," replied the detective. "There's a deep spring that moves all this machinery. In the first place Lucile Moreland is his first cousin, and the match between them had more of interest than love in it. There's a family history behind it all. The fine estate that Mr. Landers enjoys is left to him only on conditions. Miss Moreland is as near an heir as he, and the will commands them to marry and share it together."

"Ah! I begin to see."

"If he will not have her he cannot have the estate. If she shows an inclination not to have him she loses her claim on the estate."

"I see."

"But she showed no such inclination. Master Will found it to his interest to court her, and she seemed quite willing to marry her handsome cousin."

"Then why the deuce didn't they marry, and be done with it?"

"Because the young scoundrel has fallen head over ears with somebody else. He is determined to have the property without the girl. The fact is he has been deeply smitten with a handsome, high-flying, fortune-hunting young lady who has turned the heads of a dozen young sprouts in her time. One Sadie Lawson. Do you know her?"

"Know her? Go on, Hal. Don't ask me my experience in that quarter. I am no ninny, yet it was near a bite. I don't wonder at Landers."

"You see my theory now. He has got up

this abduction to clear his track, and started the story of the George Wilson flight as proof that she, not he, has broken the will. He is equally in love with Miss Sadie and the estate; and poor Lucile must clear the way for his schemes."

"It is a plausible theory," rejoined Jack, with a thoughtful look. "But it may be all conjecture."

"I think not. There are other proofs."

He proceeded to detail the circumstances with which the reader is already familiar, including Jolly Jim's adventures.

"And the letter which Trueblood is expecting may contain the key to the mystery?"

"Exactly."

"Very well. If there is an order from the court for me to detain any letters that fall into my hands, I will not venture to disobey it. I am not going back of the law to please Jason Trueblood."

"There shall be such an order. If you fail to retain any such letter it will be at peril of life, limb and estate."

The laugh in which the two friends indulged was suddenly broken. The door of the office flew open with a crash, and in sprang Jolly Jim. The boy seemed beside himself, and indulged in a wild war dance that would have done credit to a Cherokee. He ended with a leap that landed him on the middle of the table, a shrill whoop, and a flit of his hat that came near bringing down the clock, from its shelf in the corner.

"What in the devil's name ails the boy?" cried Harry, as he caught Jolly by the collar and brought him with a quick lift to the floor. "What bee have you in your bonnet now, you little rapsallion?"

He shook the boy violently, as if seeking to shake a modicum of sense into his addled brain.

"Victory! victory!" cried Jolly, breaking loose from his hands. "I've got 'em nailed plastered, trimmed! They're salted, wuss nor any salt mackerel. Oh jiminy! but the thing is b'ilin hot!"

"Who is this young lunatic?" asked Jack in surprise.

"He is the boy spy I told you of. Come, Jolly, out with it."

But the shrewd lad looked at Jack, and hesitated.

"Go on. He is true blue. If you have any sense left, let me hear your story."

"There's more nor one story," cried the boy. "It's a double-barreled one, anyhow. First barrel, I've spotted one of my sports. The short, stout one, as calls hisself Jerry."

"Good. Where?"

"Took him up at the races. Done up in brown, he was, but I done him up browner. Tracked him to a Center street gambling hole; and then to a house on Marion street, which is where he shakes down his shingle, if I ain't sold."

"Shakes down his shingle?" queried Jack.

"Lives there, I mean. Draws his ham and buttermilk rations. That's the spot, anyhow. Thought I'd fotch you the news."

"A good day's work, Jolly. You had best keep up a watch upon the house. We may make a better haul by giving Jerry free play for a while."

"Put on some other spotter," rejoined Jolly decidedly. "They're gittin' to know me. And I've got another barrel to my story, as ain't fired off yit."

"Ah! Pull your trigger, then."

"It is all about Biddy Mulligan," began Jolly. "I told you 'bout the slip of a gal, as lived at the house where I was nabbed. I've been keeping up her acquaintance since then, cause she's sry and good-lookin', and allers has a slice of somethin' nice in the oven."

"You rogue," laughed Harry. "It's the something in the oven, more than the girl, that draws you. But what about Biddy?"

"Only she promised to write to me when she got a new place. And she's a gal of her word, for here's the letter. And I tell you what, it's a gay letter."

He handed to the detective a much-crumpled letter, which the latter puzzled over for several minutes.

"But what, in the saints' name, is the scribble about?" he asked at length. "I cannot get the hang of it. I make out where she is—in a country place above Harlem. I know the neighborhood. But what is there in that to set you adrift? Who's the Masther Joe Mills that she talks about?"

"Git deeper down and you'll see," exclaimed the boy, snatching the epistle indignantly from his hand. "Look at this!" He commenced to

read: "Who'd ever belaved it, but it's the ould masther himself! Sure and I'd thought as quick of settlin' in a goold palace. It's as quare as the other place, which you know! And I do belave that—" Here he paused and stumbled. "Guess she must have rubbed her tongue over the ink there, for it's all a blot as nobody could make out."

By this time Harry had caught the secret of the letter, and there was a trace of excitement in his voice as he spoke.

"Has she hit again on the abductors?" he queried. "By Jove, Jim, if that's so this is a good day's work in earnest."

"She advertised for a place," said Jim, "and got an answer from Mr. Joe Mills. Biddy knows what's up, so she wrote me this bit of a note afore she went, for fear they moughtn't let her write arter she got there. She's a-goin' for the place, for she wants 'em nabbed, and the young lady took from them."

"Hang me if Biddy hasn't a level head! If she is not mistaken we may be on the track of the scoundrels. You must streak out there tomorrow, Jim. She will be in her place by that time. Meanwhile I'll set a watch on Jerry. It may pay to follow up both leads."

"Got your traps set, eh?" queried Jack, "and only waiting for the rats to walk into them?"

"Looks like it. It pays to wait and watch in our business."

"I hope they'll bite. There, my cigar's out. I'll toddle down to the office and see if there's any mail in for Jason Trueblood. Maybe I'll have a hand in the making of your pie. Good-day, Hal"

He walked away, leaving the detective and his disciple to a closer conference.

CHAPTER XII.

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BEYOND the limits of New York city to the north, or at least its closely-built district, in a region that was neither city nor country, but a half-way region between, stood a mansion in which we have now a particular interest. Everybody must have seen that compromise between city and country, which lacks the finished aspect of the one and the natural charm of the other, in which the country has died out and the city is not yet born, and everything is utterly crude and unfinished.

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In a few minutes Jolly had invaded the garden, after taking a keen survey of the aspect of the house. There was no person visible, and he leaped the fence with an agile movement, and crouched under cover of the bushes, as if waiting for developments. After a minute or two of cautious scrutiny, he began a slow, creeping motion toward the house.

"Mr. Keen says as I'm allers jumping in," muttered the boy. "I ain't a-goin' to do it now. I'm bound to work up this job square from the shoulder, you bet."

The suburban residence in question was a three-story brick house, of moderate size. In its rear stood a two-story kitchen, near which were various sheds and outhouses.

Within this kitchen bustled about a young lady whose acquaintance we have already made—no less a personage than Biddy Mulligan. Her rosy Irish face shone with health and good-humor, as she bustled about among the pots and pans.

"It's lucky I got that bit of a note off to Jolly 'fore I took up wid the place," she soliloquized, "for never the bit would I have a mite o' chance now, at all. I'm watched here as if I was a mouse and they was cats, and I'd not got the place only they daren't say no to Biddy Mulligan. Faix, it's my rale belief that they kape me here just to watch me, for fear that my tongue couldn't be depended on."

At this moment she was startled by a sharp tap on the window pane, and turned so quickly that an iron pan came with a ringing clash to the floor.

"Oh the Holy Mother, what was that?" she ejaculated.

A head quickly popped out through the door leading into the house.

What is that, Biddy? What are you doing?" was sharply asked.

Biddy was about to explain, but a sudden thought came to her, and she concluded to defer an explanation.

"It was only the pan, mum. The big fryin'-pan as is always a tumblin', if a soul so much as turns round."

"It's always getting a lift from your awkward shoulders," came the sharp rejoinder.

"Oh, mum!" persisted Biddy. "To hear tell the loike o' that! And I never touched it, the laste bit. To think that things niver come down o' themselves!"

"I'll not trouble myself to think anything of the kind," was the reply. "Let me hear no more of it."

The head withdrew, and the door closed with an angry bang.

Biddy stood in the middle of the floor, with clasped hands and distended eyes.

"What could it ever have been?" she asked herself. "Sure I thought it was a banshee, or summat like. But maybe it was the boy hisself."

She approached the window reluctantly, but sprang hastily back as there came another sharp tap, and she saw the outline of a hand in the dusk of the gathering evening.

It took her a minute to recover from the nervous shock.

"It's for all the world like a boy's hand, at any rate."

Stealthily opening the kitchen door, she looked heedfully out. There, crouched against the wall of the house, was a well-known youthful figure.

"Jolly!" she called in careful tones.

"Biddy, is it your sweet self?"

"Hold your whist now," exclaimed the pleased girl. "Wait till I come out till ye, for there's ears like cork-screws inside here."

She closed the door carefully, and came up to the crouching boy. Jolly caught her hand, and looked eagerly into her eyes.

"What's the news?" he hastily asked. "Have you smelt out any rats? Is she here?"

"Faix, I've a sound notion she is."

"Good!" He sprang up and cracked his heels in his delight. "Have you seen her, Biddy?"

"It's only a surmisin' I am," replied the girl. "It's as quiet and swate as maple sugar 'bout here, and nobody at all to be seen but Misther Mills and the missus."

"Then what makes you think she is here?"

"It's the cookin'," said Biddy mysteriously. "And the dishes. Don't I git up more than two reasonable Christians could ate? And there's more dishes comes out to be washed than is justifiable to such a small family."

Jolly shook his head.

"They mought have folks to meals," he suggested. "I've been watchin' round here all day, and I've seen more nor one come and go. I had to be too far away to make 'em out. But one on 'em had the cut o' Bill Bates."

"Sorry the bit did I let anybody in, then. The masther hisself must ha' tended to the door. I'm loike a prisoner here, Jolly. They trate me well enough, but they're kapin' back the wages, so as I can't go till they give me 'ave."

"Never mind that, Biddy. Mr. Keen will give you double wages. I'm goin' to find out somehow if the lady's in the house, arter it gits dark. What sorter kind o' kitchen you got here? And what's nice in the oven?"

"Niver the step must you make in the kitchen!" cried Biddy, in alarm. "I do belave the missus is got her ears glued to the keyhole. I can't drop a wee thrifle of chiny but out she pops, and there's such a hullabaloo as would raise the roof. Kape where ye air, and I'll bring ye a bite."

Biddy withdrew to the kitchen, and left Jolly, who was terribly hungry, to wait with pleasant anticipations for her return. He had longer to wait than he relished. Voices came from the kitchen. Evidently the mistress was there again.

A half hour elapsed ere Biddy ventured to return. But she was laden with some toothsome delicacies, and stood by with a delighted look as Jolly made a vigorous attack on the viands.

"I daren't for my life touch the cake and preserves," she declared. "But sure my bread is like most people's cake."

"It's good as pie, Biddy!" cried the boy, enthusiastically. "And that slice o' mutton is better nor rabbit. I dunno what'd ever come of us boys if there weren't no Biddy Mulligans around."

"Be 'asy wid you, you flatterin' young bassoon!" cried the girl. "I niver heard the loike o' ye fur blarney."

"It's not blarney, but it's every word the Gospel truth, and you know—"

He suddenly hushed and stooped down. The latch of the kitchen door had lifted.

"Biddy, where are you?" came in a shrill call.

"It's out here I am, puttin' the lid on the rain-barrel. Do you want me, mum?"

"Didn't I hear something out there like talking?" and the woman looked suspiciously out.

"It must ha' been the frogs in the pond beyant there," explained Biddy, with great presence of mind. "Hear till them now. Talking together, for all the world like so many Christians. You'd think that big one, wid the base voice, was the Lord Mayor at laste."

Biddy pushed into the kitchen, satisfied that she had shrewdly lulled suspicion. Night had now fallen, and it had grown quite dusky without, so that the crouching boy was hardly discernible in the gathering gloom. He was satisfied that he had escaped discovery, but he might have had a different opinion if he had caught a peculiar twinkle in the woman's eyes.

Jolly had not been idle during his slow approach to the house. He had keenly inspected it, and had arrived at two conclusions. One of these was as to the room in which the prisoner was confined, if there; and the other as how to reach it. Certainly one of those windows, though innocent enough without, had a suspicion of bars within. And this upper window was within reach from the roof of the two-storied back building, if he could only gain that elevation.

"I'm bound to find out if she's here 'fore I raise a row," he declared. "Ain't goin' to give Mr. Keen the laugh on me, nohow. Get the gal nailed once, and then I'll fotch down the perlice."

It looked, at first sight, as if it would be no easy matter to gain the kitchen roof. But Jolly was equal to the difficulty. A tree grew at no great distance, one of whose limbs reached out over the roof. It was little trouble to the active lad to shin it up the slender trunk to the branches. These once gained, he went up hand over hand. In a minute or two he had gained the outstretching limb, and was worming himself out toward the roof. It bent dangerously with his weight as he got well out on it. But there was no go back in Jolly. He kept on until the swaying limb rested on the eaves. He was now near enough to reach the edge of the flat roof. A quick grasp, a spring, a squirm, and he was safely landed, while the loosened limb swayed sharply back into the air.

So much gained, his further course was plain sailing. The window which he sought was one of two which looked out upon the roof. He crept noiselessly toward it, and glued his face against a lower pane, as he sought to look within.

It was no easy matter. The room was very dark, and was obstructed within by what seemed wide strips of wood, running from side to side. Yet the sharp-eyed boy fancied that he could make out a figure, crouched in a drooping attitude upon a chair.

He tried to lift the sash, and succeeded in getting it up a few inches. Now he was sure, for the dark figure quickly moved, while a suppressed cry came to his ears.

"Who is there?" was spoken, in the low tones of a sweet voice.

"Hist!" warned Jolly. "It's a friend. Keep still. Jist tell me yer name."

The woman had now come to the window, and her face was pressed close to the bars. Jolly could make out a wistful face, beautiful as an angel as he thought, and now full of the light of hope.

"My name is Lucile Moreland," she replied. "Can you do anything, anything, to get me out of this horrid prison?"

"That's what I'm here fur," rejoined the confident boy. "I only wanted to find out if you was here. Jist you keep level fur to-night, miss, and we'll swipe the old place to-morrow, the wust way. Good-night, and keep up your sperets. I'm a-goin' now, but I'll soon be back again."

"I wouldn't go by that dangerous path," came a mocking voice at his elbow. "I can show you a better."

A hard grip fastened on his collar. Jolly squirmed and looked upward, to catch the hard face of Joe Mills.

"Collared!" he exclaimed, while a cry of alarm came from the prisoner.

"It looks that way," sneered the captor. "Come along, little chap, I've got safe quarters waiting for you."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF A LONG CHASE.

AT a late hour of the day succeeding that of Jolly's adventure a group of men stood in one of the partly-built streets, within a mile of the same locality.

One of these was the detective, Harry Keen. Another was his friend, Jack Prince. There was one other person in citizens' dress, while the remainder were policemen!

"We have met you here, according to appointment, Hal," said Jack. "What's the sport? If there's game afoot, you couldn't find keener hunters."

"The game is under cover as yet," replied Harry. "We will have to beat the bushes. I have the English sport, Jerry, nailed. He is in the house before us. I don't know what stuff he is made of, but I hope to make him put us on the track."

"It may prove a false hope," answered Jack, shaking his head.

"At any rate, something must be done, and quickly. Will Landers is about to be married to Sadie Lawson. He has rushed his courtship, and the wedding is fixed for to-day. I am afraid for the other girl. She is decidedly in his way now, and there is no telling what the desperate villain may do."

"That reminds me," cried Jack. "The letter for Jason Trueblood has arrived. I have it here. Of course, I do not intend to meddle with it. But if commanded in the name of the law—"

"A letter!" exclaimed Harry. "I command you, then, in the name of the law."

"If I must, I must," answered Jack, handing over the missive. "The fiend take the rascal, anyhow. I am not going to be his letter-carrier."

Without hesitation, Harry tore open the epistle and rapidly read its contents.

"It reads a little mysteriously," he remarked. "Something in this fashion: 'The baggage is safe packed, waiting orders. Got your letter 'bout the disposing, but that ain't my style. I'll run it as far as you want, if you plank down the needful, but don't talk to me of the silent and speedy plan. That's not my vein. Something's got to be done—'

read: "Who'd ever belaved it, but it's the ould masther himself! Sure and I'd thought as quick of settlin' in a goold palace. It's as quare as the other place, which you know! And I do belave that—" Here he paused and stumbled. "Guess she must have rubbed her tongue over the ink there, for it's all a blot as nobody could make out."

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"I'll not trouble myself to think anything of the kind," was the reply. "Let me hear no more of it."

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Biddy pushed into the kitchen, satisfied that she had shrewdly lulled suspicion. Night had now fallen, and it had grown quite dusky without, so that the crouching boy was hardly discernible in the gathering gloom. He was satisfied that he had escaped discovery, but he might have had a different opinion if he had caught a peculiar twinkle in the woman's eyes.

Jolly had not been idle during his slow approach to the house. He had keenly inspected it, and had arrived at two conclusions. One of these was as to the room in which the prisoner was confined, if there; and the other as how to reach it. Certainly one of those windows, though innocent enough without, had a suspicion of bars within. And this upper window was within reach from the roof of the two-storied back building, if he could only gain that elevation.

"I'm bound to find out if she's here 'fore I raise a row," he declared. "Ain't goin' to give Mr. Keen the laugh on me, nohow. Get the gal nailed once, and then I'll fotch down the perlice."

It looked, at first sight, as if it would be no easy matter to gain the kitchen roof. But Jolly was equal to the difficulty. A tree grew at no great distance, one of whose limbs reached out over the roof. It was little trouble to the active lad to shin it up the slender trunk to the branches. These once gained, he went up hand over hand. In a minute or two he had gained the outstretching limb, and was worming himself out toward the roof. It bent dangerously with his weight as he got well out on it. But there was no go back in Jolly. He kept on until the swaying limb rested on the eaves. He was now near enough to reach the edge of the flat roof. A quick grasp, a spring, a squirm, and he was safely landed, while the loosened limb swayed sharply back into the air.

So much gained, his further course was plain sailing. The window which he sought was one of two which looked out upon the roof. He crept noiselessly toward it, and glued his face against a lower pane, as he sought to look within.

It was no easy matter. The room was very dark, and was obstructed within by what seemed wide strips of wood, running from side to side. Yet the sharp-eyed boy fancied that he could make out a figure, crouched in a drooping attitude upon a chair.

He tried to lift the sash, and succeeded in getting it up a few inches. Now he was sure, for the dark figure quickly moved, while a suppressed cry came to his ears.

"Who is there?" was spoken, in the low tones of a sweet voice.

"Hist!" warned Jolly. "It's a friend. Keep still. Jist tell me yer name."

The woman had now come to the window, and her face was pressed close to the bars. Jolly could make out a wistful face, beautiful as an angel as he thought, and now full of the light of hope.

"My name is Lucile Moreland," she replied. "Can you do anything, anything, to get me out of this horrid prison?"

"That's what I'm here fur," rejoined the confident boy. "I only wanted to find out if you was here. Jist you keep level fur to-night, miss, and we'll swipe the old place to-morrow, the wust way. Good-night, and keep up your sperets. I'm a-goin' now, but I'll soon be back again."

"I wouldn't go by that dangerous path," came a mocking voice at his elbow. "I can show you a better."

A hard grip fastened on his collar. Jolly squirmed and looked upward, to catch the hard face of Joe Mills.

"Collared!" he exclaimed, while a cry of alarm came from the prisoner.

"It looks that way," sneered the captor. "Come along, little chap, I've got safe quarters waiting for you."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF A LONG CHASE.

AT a late hour of the day succeeding that of Jolly's adventure a group of men stood in one of the partly-built streets, within a mile of the same locality.

One of these was the detective, Harry Keen. Another was his friend, Jack Prince. There was one other person in citizens' dress, while the remainder were policemen!

"We have met you here, according to appointment, Hal," said Jack. "What's the sport? If there's game afoot, you couldn't find keener hunters."

"The game is under cover as yet," replied Harry. "We will have to beat the bushes. I have the English sport, Jerry, nailed. He is in the house before us. I don't know what stuff he is made of, but I hope to make him put us on the track."

"It may prove a false hope," answered Jack, shaking his head.

"At any rate, something must be done, and quickly. Will Landers is about to be married to Sadie Lawson. He has rushed his courtship, and the wedding is fixed for to-day. I am afraid for the other girl. She is decidedly in his way now, and there is no telling what the desperate villain may do."

"That reminds me," cried Jack. "The letter for Jason Trueblood has arrived. I have it here. Of course, I do not intend to meddle with it. But if commanded in the name of the law—"

"A letter!" exclaimed Harry. "I command you, then, in the name of the law."

"If I must, I must," answered Jack, handing over the missive. "The fiend take the rascal, anyhow. I am not going to be his letter-carrier."

Without hesitation, Harry tore open the epistle and rapidly read its contents.

"It reads a little mysteriously," he remarked. "Something in this fashion: 'The baggage is safe packed, waiting orders. Got your letter 'bout the disposing, but that ain't my style. I'll run it as far as you want, if you plank down the needful, but don't talk to me of the silent and speedy plan. That's not my vein. Something's got to be done—'

soon. I'm afeared we're planked. There was a sly nib smelling round here last night. We've got the rat trapped, and in Coventry; but there might be others posted. Prompt's the word. Answer by lightning express afore the bottom drops out of the bag." Signed, "J. M." I don't like that letter," he continued, shaking his head. "There's a dark meaning in it."

"Why hang it, it is a case not of 'recommended to mercy,' but 'recommended to murder!'" cried Jack. "The brute must have been hinting to them murder the girl. It is lucky the dog is better than his master. Stir up, Harry, we must catch him on the fly."

"So I think myself. We cannot tell but that Trueblood may have offered stronger inducements. A few dollars may change a rogue's mind. Besides, it is evident they have nabbed my boy Jim, and I can't spare that young scapegrace."

A few minutes sufficed to make a different disposition of the group. They were posted so as to command the house to which Jerry had been traced. Then Harry, accompanied by one of the policemen, rung at the house door. It was opened in response to his ring; but a sharp effort was made to close it when the official uniform was seen.

"Not so fast," cried the detective, advancing his foot, and checking the closing door. "We've got business inside, if you've no objections."

A push from his strong hand drove back the youth at the door, and Harry and his follower entered. The young man, with a scared face, ran hastily back.

"Stop!" cried Harry, decisively, as he drew and cocked a pistol.

But the youth dodged quickly through an open doorway and disappeared.

"Come on!" commanded Harry, hastily darting forward. The officer followed.

Jack, who stood at the front door, heard loud noises within the house. There came the quick trampling of feet and the sound of excited voices. Several minutes elapsed, and then Harry reappeared. He grasped by the collar an angry-faced prisoner, no less a person than Jerry, the English sport.

"Call the men in. We've got our bird," ordered the detective.

A shrill whistle had the desired effect. The men posted in the rear of the house made their appearance. But it was immediately evident that they, too, had made a catch. They brought with them a tall, slim individual, dressed much like the other prisoner.

"Aha!" cried Harry. "So there were two birds in the cage. Where did you snatch this plover?"

"He jumped from a second-story window," explained the captor.

"He must be a regular acrobat. So, friend Adam, you took a fly, eh?"

"My name isn't Adam," was the surly reply.

"And this man isn't called Jerry, I suppose? Then I am sadly mistaken, and I don't often make a mistake."

Some more jibing words passed, when Harry changed his tones to harsh, severe accents:

"I know, my men," he declared. "Adam here was lately a dealer at Clark's faro-bank, and Jerry is rather cute at doctoring racers. Very neat lines of business, but you'd better have stuck to them. It don't pay men of your age to take up new trades—such as stealing young ladies."

The prisoners changed color at this accusation.

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The prisoners exchanged glances.

"I know no more than the man in the moon what all this jabber's about!" exclaimed Adam, with assumed indignation.

"It's a darned lie!" cried Jerry; "and if you don't take your dirty fingers from us we'll have the law of the whole batch of you. We're none of your Yankee gudgeons."

"You can have two minutes to decide," said Harry, decisively. "Lead us to the place and you can go free. Refuse, and you go to the Tombs.—Look out for a hawk," he commanded one of the officers.

Harry stood watch in hand. The prisoners continued silent and sullen.

"Time's up," he declared, placing his watch in his pocket. "And yonder's the hawk now. Call the driver here, Tim."

The carriage drove briskly up.

"I have a fare for you, my man," said Harry. "Drive to the Tombs. Put the darbies on these chaps, men, and into the carriage with them. You take them down, Tim."

Adam and Jerry silently and sullenly submitted to be handcuffed and thrust into the carriage.

"You have a last chance," called Harry. "Will you guide us?"

"Don't know what you're talkin' about," growled Adam.

"You'll pay for this outrage," roared Jerry.

"All right. You have elected. Drive on." He slammed the carriage door and it drove sharply off.

"That hope's dashed," said Jack.

"I am not so sure. Their bravado may break down now that they know I am in earnest. Meanwhile we must make a search for the house. I fancied I could lay my hand immediately on it, but this region has so changed lately that I have lost my reckoning. It seems that rogue, Jolly Jim, is sharper than me."

He started off, leaving one man to wait for Tim, in case he should bring back his prisoners.

"It is too well built up here," said Harry. "Off here to the left is a more promising district. I fancy our quarry is in some of those lone houses."

Fifteen minutes' walk brought them into a more thinly-settled district. Here and there were rows of several houses, but other edifices stood alone, some of them having the aspect of old farm-houses.

It was somewhat difficult to choose out of this variety of mansions. It was hardly advisable to search each in succession. There were too many of them for that. And in searching for the most likely ones Harry found himself considerably at a loss.

Very few persons were about. Here was a man dragging in a field; there a teamster with a load of stone; yonder a girl, walking with a hasty step.

As this girl came closer it was evident that she was hot and excited. Her face was flushed and her eyes had a wild, wistful look that attracted Harry's attention.

"What is the matter, my girl?" he asked, in kindly tones. "Has anything happened to you?"

"Oh, you are policemen!" she cried, clasping her hands. "Sure and maybe you'll be after helping me! It's run away I have; and will ye come back wid me?"

"What is your name?" asked Harry, with a strong suspicion.

"Biddy Mulligan, at your service."

"By the Lord, but you're well met, Biddy. You are living with Joe Mills, who has a young lady prisoner, and also a ragged boy called Jolly. Isn't it so?"

"Faix, and it's a magician ye are!" exclaimed Biddy, looking at him in half affright. "And will ye come?"

"I fancy we will. That's what we are here for."

In a few minutes more they were on their way back with Biddy, who rattled away at a rapid rate, describing all that had occurred in the last two days.

"I was mighty innocent last night and the day, for fear they'd be after lockin' me up, too. I couldn't move a toe but the missus was watchin' me. But I jist now left the praty pan, and slipped out the back door, while she was out o' sight for a spell. And sorry the bit do I ever crave to live wid such pable again, for it's dreadful wearin' to a poor soul."

At their quick pace not many minutes elapsed ere they came to the immediate vicinity of the house. More caution was now necessary. Biddy was left behind, in the shelter of a neighboring mansion. The others separated, and spread out like a party of hunters who wish to surround their game. They each moved to his appointed station, and then began a gradual closing-in movement. At every step the house became more closely enveloped in their coils.

So far all had seemed quiet about the edifice. Yet Harry felt sure that their movement must be watched. The escape of Biddy had certainly been discovered, and must have given the alarm.

This became more evident as the front door was observed to open, and a man to leave the house. He walked onward at a leisurely pace, apparently not observing the scouting party. It happened that he made his approach to the citizen who had accompanied Jack Prime. The latter seemed in doubt what to do.

"Take him!" cried Harry. "Hold up there, my man!"

The man at once started to run. Harry drew his pistol and again commanded him to stop. He continued his flight. But the citizen was now in full pursuit. It soon proved that he was an unusually swift runner, and within two minutes he had his hand on the shoulder of the fugitive. The latter turned and showed fight, but he was like a feather in the hands of the man who had caught him.

"Come now, before I have to shake you into your senses," commanded the captor.

"I knew it!" cried Jack to Harry in delight. "I knew if George Wilson got his clutch on him it was all up with the fellow."

By this time the cordon of officers, which had continued to approach, was well up with the house. They formed a ring, not twenty paces distant.

"Hand over your prisoner to one of the officers, Mr. Wilson," called out Harry. "I want you and Jack with me."

Leaving the policemen for outside duty the three men approached, and entered the house at its open front door. No person was visible, and they walked without opposition through the deserted halls and rooms.

"This way," said Harry, leading up-stairs.

Reaching the third floor, they saw that it was composed of but two rooms, with an intervening entry. The doors were both closed, and apparently locked. Harry violently shook the first of these. It failed to yield to his hand.

"Let me!" exclaimed Wilson.

He set his broad shoulders to the door. To all appearance he gave scarcely an effort, yet it flew open, the lock being rent loose from the screws that held it. On the floor of the opened room lay, in a trussed-up bundle, no less a personage than Jolly Jim. He was securely bound and gagged.

Leaving Harry to release him, the two citizens applied their strength to the other door. It was more securely fastened, but they soon succeeded in breaking its locks and bolts.

A cry of alarm came from within as the door flew open. There stood a fair-faced, beautiful girl, with clasped hands and frightened eyes, looking eagerly out.

"Oh!" she cried, "are you friends or foes? Are you come to my rescue?"

"Friends," was the answer. "You are free."

"Thank God for that!"

She trembled with the revulsion of feeling, and fell nervelessly into a chair.

"And, by jimminy, I'm free, too!" cried Jolly, whom Harry had just released. "I guess you and me was two babies in the woods together, but we've got out afore the wolves chawed us up. They've had their innings, but I calculate they're goin' to find that the other side is at the bat now; and if they don't git warped out there's no snakes! Can't play none of their gum games on Jolly Jim."

CHAPTER XIV.

A SCENE AT A WEDDING.

WITHIN a tastefully furnished mansion on a west side New York street an interesting ceremony seemed about to be performed. There were present Will Landers, neatly attired in broadcloth, with white neck-tie, and a look of intense self-satisfaction. About him was a group of friends, dressed as for a festive occasion. By a door to the left of the room a number of ladies were just entering, the most prominent among them being Sadie Lawson, who was attired in bridal array.

Will had certainly made a wise choice, if beauty was his object. The girl looked magnificently beautiful. The flush in her cheeks, her proud lips and high-curved brows, the rounded and stately form, gave her a Diana-like dignity and grace that was irresistibly attractive.

Yet a sharp observer might have fancied that there was something concealed under that proud aspect. There was an occasional quiver of the lip, and a contraction of the brows, that betokened pain rather than pleasure. Was she offering herself a sacrifice on the altar of Mammon? It certainly had that appearance.

"You have kept us waiting," said Will, with a tinge of sharpness in his voice. "Excuse me, love, but I cannot help a little impatience just now. Do you know you are superb?" he whispered in her ear.

"I wish I was not. I hate compliments," came from her in a tone that was almost snappish. Then she forced herself to smile, and to respond more graciously.

A few minutes afterward found her beside her brother Howard. A harsh look came into her face as she met his glance.

"You have forced me to this," she whispered, in a hissing tone. "If I had it to do again I would die rather than consent. I cannot endure the man."

"But you can the money," was the cold response. "Don't lay it on me, Sadie. It is your own choice."

"That is false, Howard. And you know it."

Ten minutes afterward the bride and groom stood before the minister who was to unite them in the sacred bonds of matrimony. She had now schooled her face to a serene look. She was too proud to make her true feelings patent to all those present.

The bridesmaids and groomsmen assumed their positions. The others variously grouped themselves about the room. Outside the door stood a group of domestics, who seemed very numerous for a house of that size.

The ceremony proceeded, with the proper responses. Will looked flushed and happy. Sadie had slightly paled, but appeared bent on completing the sacrifice she had elected.

"Will you have this woman to be your wedded wife?"

"Yes," answered Will, in a bold voice, and with a look of intense gratification upon the beautiful being beside him.

The same question was put to the bride. It was the critical point. She paled, hesitated, her fingers nervously contracted. Ere she could speak there came in a loud, clear voice from the door of the room, the answer:

"No!"

The excitement and consternation at this interruption may be imagined. The bride stood trembling, yet with a look of hope upon her speaking features. Will turned, his face full of angry rage.

"Who is that? Who dares?" he ejaculated. "By heaven, if any man—"

He stopped suddenly, as his eyes fell on the figure of the man who emerged from the group of domestics, and advanced into the room.

"Harry Keen!" faltered the bridegroom.

"Just so," was the cool answer. "I have no objection to this young lady marrying you, if she desires to; but I prefer that she shall do it with her eyes open. You have given me the task of discovering your abducted betrothed, Lucile Moreland. As the finding her may change some people's opinions here, I thought it best to interrupt the wedding by announcing the fact."

"What fact?" gasped Will.

"That the stolen lady has been found."

"It is a lie!" he harshly interrupted. "There was no abduction! She ran away! She absconded with George Wilson! I can prove—"

"Prove what?"

The person who spoke was a broad-shouldered, stern-faced man, whose eyes were fixed with glittering keenness on Will Landers's face. The latter turned pale as he caught the glare of those eyes.

"Prove what?" came the question again. "I am George Wilson. Say again that I absconded with a young lady, and I will choke you as I would a dog."

By this time there was a scene in the room. Landers's friends were viewing with indignant looks the interruptors of the ceremony. The ladies were huddled together like a flock of scared birds. As for the bride, she stood erect, with clasped hands, while her eyes were fixed with a strange expression on the speakers. The bridegroom rested his hand on a chair-back for support, his eyes on the floor, as if they could not bear that fiery glance.

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Will had certainly made a wise choice, if beauty was his object. The girl looked magnificently beautiful. The flush in her cheeks, her proud lips and high-curved brows, the rounded and stately form, gave her a Diana-like dignity and grace that was irresistibly attractive.

Yet a sharp observer might have fancied that there was something concealed under that proud aspect. There was an occasional quiver of the lip, and a contraction of the brows, that betokened pain rather than pleasure. Was she offering herself a sacrifice on the altar of Mammon? It certainly had that appearance.

"You have kept us waiting," said Will, with a tinge of sharpness in his voice. "Excuse me, love, but I cannot help a little impatience just now. Do you know you are superb?" he whispered in her ear.

"I wish I was not. I hate compliments," came from her in a tone that was almost snappish. Then she forced herself to smile, and to respond more graciously.

A few minutes afterward found her beside her brother Howard. A harsh look came into her face as she met his glance.

"You have forced me to this," she whispered, in a hissing tone. "If I had it to do again I would die rather than consent. I cannot endure the man."

"But you can the money," was the cold response. "Don't lay it on me, Sadie. It is your own choice."

"That is false, Howard. And you know it."

Ten minutes afterward the bride and groom stood before the minister who was to unite them in the sacred bonds of matrimony. She had now schooled her face to a serene look. She was too proud to make her true feelings patent to all those present.

The bridesmaids and groomsmen assumed their positions. The others variously grouped themselves about the room. Outside the door stood a group of domestics, who seemed very numerous for a house of that size.

The ceremony proceeded, with the proper responses. Will looked flushed and happy. Sadie had slightly paled, but appeared bent on completing the sacrifice she had elected.

"Will you have this woman to be your wedded wife?"

"Yes," answered Will, in a bold voice, and with a look of intense gratification upon the beautiful being beside him.

The same question was put to the bride. It was the critical point. She paled, hesitated, her fingers nervously contracted. Ere she could speak there came in a loud, clear voice from the door of the room, the answer:

"No!"

The excitement and consternation at this interruption may be imagined. The bride stood trembling, yet with a look of hope upon her speaking features. Will turned, his face full of angry rage.

"Who is that? Who dares?" he ejaculated. "By heaven, if any man—"

He stopped suddenly, as his eyes fell on the figure of the man who emerged from the group of domestics, and advanced into the room.

"Harry Keen!" faltered the bridegroom.

"Just so," was the cool answer. "I have no objection to this young lady marrying you, if she desires to; but I prefer that she shall do it with her eyes open. You have given me the task of discovering your abducted betrothed, Lucile Moreland. As the finding her may change some people's opinions here, I thought it best to interrupt the wedding by announcing the fact."

"What fact?" gasped Will.

"That the stolen lady has been found."

"It is a lie!" he harshly interrupted. "There was no abduction! She ran away! She absconded with George Wilson! I can prove—"

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The person who spoke was a broad-shouldered, stern-faced man, whose eyes were fixed with glittering keenness on Will Landers's face. The latter turned pale as he caught the glare of those eyes.

"Prove what?" came the question again. "I am George Wilson. Say again that I absconded with a young lady, and I will choke you as I would a dog."

By this time there was a scene in the room. Landers's friends were viewing with indignant looks the interruptors of the ceremony. The ladies were huddled together like a flock of scared birds. As for the bride, she stood erect, with clasped hands, while her eyes were fixed with a strange expression on the speakers. The bridegroom rested his hand on a chair-back for support, his eyes on the floor, as if they could not bear that fiery glance.

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"So I think myself. We cannot tell but that Trueblood may have offered stronger inducements. A few dollars may change a rogue's mind. Besides, it is evident they have nabbed my boy Jim, and I can't spare that young scapegrace."

A few minutes sufficed to make a different disposition of the group. They were posted so as to command the house to which Jerry had been traced. Then Harry, accompanied by one of the policemen, rung at the house door. It was opened in response to his ring; but a sharp effort was made to close it when the official uniform was seen.

"Not so fast," cried the detective, advancing his foot, and checking the closing door. "We've got business inside, if you've no objections."

A push from his strong hand drove back the youth at the door, and Harry and his follower entered. The young man, with a scared face, ran hastily back.

"Stop!" cried Harry, decisively, as he drew and cocked a pistol.

But the youth dodged quickly through an open doorway and disappeared.

"Come on!" commanded Harry, hastily darting forward. The officer followed.

Jack, who stood at the front door, heard loud noises within the house. There came the quick trampling of feet and the sound of excited voices. Several minutes elapsed, and then Harry reappeared. He grasped by the collar an angry-faced prisoner, no less a person than Jerry, the English sport.

"Call the men in. We've got our bird," ordered the detective.

A shrill whistle had the desired effect. The men posted in the rear of the house made their appearance. But it was immediately evident that they, too, had made a catch. They brought with them a tall, slim individual, dressed much like the other prisoner.

"Aha!" cried Harry. "So there were two birds in the cage. Where did you snatch this plover?"

"He jumped from a second-story window," explained the captor.

"He must be a regular acrobat. So, friend Adam, you took a fly, eh?"

"My name isn't Adam," was the surly reply.

"And this man isn't called Jerry, I suppose? Then I am sadly mistaken, and I don't often make a mistake."

Some more jibing words passed, when Harry changed his tones to harsh, severe accents:

"I know, my men," he declared. "Adam here was lately a dealer at Clark's faro-bank, and Jerry is rather cute at doctoring racers. Very neat lines of business, but you'd better have stuck to them. It don't pay men of your age to take up new trades—such as stealing young ladies."

The prisoners changed color at this accusation.

"We have you nailed, my men," continued Harry, severely. "I would rather not be harsh with you, though, as it is your first offense, and there are deeper villains behind. Lead us to where the girl is concealed and you can go scot free. Refuse, and I will have you in the Tombs before an hour."

The prisoners exchanged glances.

"I know no more than the man in the moon what all this jabber's about!" exclaimed Adam, with assumed indignation.

"It's a durned lie!" cried Jerry; "and if you don't take your dirty fingers from us we'll have the law of the whole batch of you. We're none of your Yankee gudgeons."

"You can have two minutes to decide," said Harry, decisively. "Lead us to the place and you can go free. Refuse, and you go to the Tombs.—Look out for a hawk," he commanded one of the officers.

Harry stood watch in hand. The prisoners continued silent and sullen.

"Time's up," he declared, placing his watch in his pocket. "And yonder's the hawk now. Call the driver here, Tim."

The carriage drove briskly up.

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Adam and Jerry silently and sullenly submitted to be handcuffed and thrust into the carriage.

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"Don't know what you're talkin' about," growled Adam.

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"All right. You have elected. Drive on." He slammed the carriage door and it drove sharply off.

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It was somewhat difficult to choose out of this variety of mansions. It was hardly advisable to search each in succession. There were too many of them for that. And in searching for the most likely ones Harry found himself considerably at a loss.

Very few persons were about. Here was a man dragging in a field; there a teamster with a load of stone; yonder a girl, walking with a hasty step.

As this girl came closer it was evident that she was hot and excited. Her face was flushed and her eyes had a wild, wistful look that attracted Harry's attention.

"What is the matter, my girl?" he asked, in kindly tones. "Has anything happened to you?"

"Oh, you are policemen!" she cried, clasping her hands. "Sure and maybe you'll be after helping me! It's run away I have; and will ye come back wid me?"

"What is your name?" asked Harry, with a strong suspicion.

"Biddy Mulligan, at your service."

"By the Lord, but you're well met, Biddy. You are living with Joe Mills, who has a young lady prisoner, and also a ragged boy called Jolly. Isn't it so?"

"Faix, and it's a magician ye are!" exclaimed Biddy, looking at him in half affright. "And will ye come?"

"I fancy we will. That's what we are here for."

In a few minutes more they were on their way back with Biddy, who rattled away at a rapid rate, describing all that had occurred in the last two days.

"I was mighty innocent last night and the day, for fear they'd be after lockin' me up, too. I couldn't move a toe but the missus was watchin' me. But I jist now left the praty pan, and slipped out the back door, while she was out o' sight for a spell. And sorry the bit do I ever crave to live wid such pable again, for it's dreadful wearin' to a poor soul."

At their quick pace not many minutes elapsed ere they came to the immediate vicinity of the house. More caution was now necessary. Biddy was left behind, in the shelter of a neighboring mansion. The others separated, and spread out like a party of hunters who wish to surround their game. They each moved to his appointed station, and then began a gradual closing-in movement. At every step the house became more closely enveloped in their coils.

So far all had seemed quiet about the edifice. Yet Harry felt sure that their movement must be watched. The escape of Biddy had certainly been discovered, and must have given the alarm.

This became more evident as the front door was observed to open, and a man to leave the house. He walked onward at a leisurely pace, apparently not observing the scouting party. It happened that he made his approach to the citizen who had accompanied Jack Prime. The latter seemed in doubt what to do.

"Take him!" cried Harry. "Hold up there, my man!"

The man at once started to run. Harry drew his pistol and again commanded him to stop. He continued his flight. But the citizen was now in full pursuit. It soon proved that he was an unusually swift runner, and within two minutes he had his hand on the shoulder of the fugitive. The latter turned and showed fight, but he was like a feather in the hands of the man who had caught him.

"Come now, before I have to shake you into your senses," commanded the captor.

"I knew it!" cried Jack to Harry in delight. "I knew if George Wilson got his clutch on him it was all up with the fellow."

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"Hand over your prisoner to one of the officers, Mr. Wilson," called out Harry. "I want you and Jack with me."

Leaving the policemen for outside duty the three men approached, and entered the house at its open front door. No person was visible, and they walked without opposition through the deserted halls and rooms.

"This way," said Harry, leading up-stairs.

Reaching the third floor, they saw that it was composed of but two rooms, with an intervening entry. The doors were both closed, and apparently locked. Harry violently shook the first of these. It failed to yield to his hand.

"Let me!" exclaimed Wilson.

He set his broad shoulders to the door. To all appearance he gave scarcely an effort, yet it flew open, the lock being rent loose from the screws that held it. On the floor of the opened room lay, in a trussed-up bundle, no less a personage than Jolly Jim. He was securely bound and gagged.

Leaving Harry to release him, the two citizens applied their strength to the other door. It was more securely fastened, but they soon succeeded in breaking its locks and bolts.

A cry of alarm came from within as the door flew open. There stood a fair-faced, beautiful girl, with clasped hands and frightened eyes, looking eagerly out.

"Oh!" she cried, "are you friends or foes? Are you come to my rescue?"

"Friends," was the answer. "You are free."

"Thank God for that!"

She trembled with the revulsion of feeling, and fell nervelessly into a chair.

"And, by jimminy, I'm free, too!" cried Jolly, whom Harry had just released. "I guess you and me was two babies in the woods together, but we've got out afore the wolves chawed us up. They've had their innings, but I calculate they're goin' to find that the other side is at the bat now; and if they don't git warped out there's no snakes! Can't play none of their gum games on Jolly Jim."

CHAPTER XIV.

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"But you can the money," was the cold response. "Don't lay it on me, Sadie. It is your own choice."

"That is false, Howard. And you know it."

Ten minutes afterward the bride and groom stood before the minister who was to unite them in the sacred bonds of matrimony. She had now schooled her face to a serene look. She was too proud to make her true feelings patent to all those present.

The bridesmaids and groomsmen assumed their positions. The others variously grouped themselves about the room. Outside the door stood a group of domestics, who seemed very numerous for a house of that size.

The ceremony proceeded, with the proper responses. Will looked flushed and happy. Sadie had slightly paled, but appeared bent on completing the sacrifice she had elected.

"Will you have this woman to be your wedded wife?"

"Yes," answered Will, in a bold voice, and with a look of intense gratification upon the beautiful being beside him.

The same question was put to the bride. It was the critical point. She paled, hesitated, her fingers nervously contracted. Ere she could speak there came in a loud, clear voice from the door of the room, the answer:

"No!"

The excitement and consternation at this interruption may be imagined. The bride stood trembling, yet with a look of hope upon her speaking features. Will turned, his face full of angry rage.

"Who is that? Who dares?" he ejaculated. "By heaven, if any man—"

He stopped suddenly, as his eyes fell on the figure of the man who emerged from the group of domestics, and advanced into the room.

"Harry Keen!" faltered the bridegroom.

"Just so," was the cool answer. "I have no objection to this young lady marrying you, if she desires to; but I prefer that she shall do it with her eyes open. You have given me the task of discovering your abducted betrothed, Lucile Moreland. As the finding her may change some people's opinions here, I thought it best to interrupt the wedding by announcing the fact."

"What fact?" gasped Will.

"That the stolen lady has been found."

"It is a lie!" he harshly interrupted. "There was no abduction! She ran away! She absconded with George Wilson! I can prove—"

"Prove what?"

The person who spoke was a broad-shouldered, stern-faced man, whose eyes were fixed with glittering keenness on Will Landers's face. The latter turned pale as he caught the glare of those eyes.

"Prove what?" came the question again. "I am George Wilson. Say again that I absconded with a young lady, and I will choke you as I would a dog."

By this time there was a scene in the room. Landers's friends were viewing with indignant looks the interruptors of the ceremony. The ladies were huddled together like a flock of scared birds. As for the bride, she stood erect, with clasped hands, while her eyes were fixed with a strange expression on the speakers. The bridegroom rested his hand on a chair-back for support, his eyes on the floor, as if they could not bear that fiery glance.

Wilson again spoke, more indignantly than before.

"I love Lucile Moreland. I acknowledge it. But I have never said these words before, and I would rather die than injure her. And the man that accuses me of it does so at his peril!"

"I was told—I thought—" began the faltering villain.

"You thought," cried the detective, indignantly, "to make it appear that she had broken the will. You had her abducted, and then set afloat this story of her absconding. I have found the poor captive, in the hands of your confederates. If you do not believe, look. She is here!"

In the doorway stood a fair-faced, beautiful girl, the golden hair floating above her eyes. Her face was filled with shame of her false cousin, rather than indignation.

The confused villain dropped into the chair beside him, quite unnerved by this sudden apparition. Sadie took a step forward, her black eyes fixed glitteringly upon her rival. Yet a look of relief was on her face. She touched her brother on the arm.

"Come," she said, briefly. "And let us thank God that I have escaped!"

"There is a lie afloat here!" yelled Will, with sudden rage. "Stay where you are, Sadie. This matter must be settled. I know nothing about this affair, and will not rest under the imputation. Lucile has broken the will. I am free from its command, and will not marry her, if she should pray for it."

"Do you mean that?" asked the officer quickly.

"Yes. I am betrothed to this woman here, and will marry no other."

"Gentlemen and ladies, you all hear," cried Harry. "You are witnesses that he has refused Lucile Moreland's hand. She has never refused his. He has broken the will, not she. The estate descends to her, and he has made himself a beggar by his villainy."

"It is a lie!" cried Will, starting up. "It is a trap, and you shall not catch me in it. Lucile broke the will by absconding with my rival."

"She was carried away by your agents," answered Harry calmly.

"I defy you to prove it!"

"I can easily do so. They are all in custody."

"What do I care for your hired ruffians? You have bought some men to swear to a lie!"

"Well, then, if you want further proof, you shall have it. I can bring evidence that on the night of September 13th, Will Landers drove from his stables alone, with a closed carriage. On the same night, an hour later, Lucile Moreland was taken from her prison, and conveyed to a more distant one."

"And what if you can?" sneered the villain. "This gentleman, Mr. Howard Lawson, can testify that on that night I took him up, and we drove out to Ike Merry's together."

"A neat dodge, but it won't work," answered the officer. "I have proof that they were the same carriages. Step forward, Jolly."

At this demand Jolly emerged from the group in the background, his face full of all its boyish assurance.

"Tell your story, my boy."

"Ain't got much of a story," rejoined Jolly. "'Cept that I've been snatched twice while I was trackin' the pretty lady. But 'bout that carriage, I seed it when it was carryin' her away, and I seed it since in Mr. Landers's stables. I'll go a peck of horse-chestnuts it's the same."

"Mr. Prime, do you recognize this gentleman?" asked the detective.

"Yes. It is Jason Trueblood, who has an office in the same building with me."

"Where he receives letters from the jailer of this prisoner," supplied the detective.

"It is false!" cried the trembling villain. "It is all a base plot!"

"Not quite. I am not done with my witnesses yet. Bridget Mulligan."

The rosy-cheeked Irish lass stepped eagerly forward.

"Have you seen this man before?"

"Faix an' I have, then!" she cried, after a brief inspection. "Sure an' I seen him at Masther Joe Mills's house when this purty leddy was locked up there. It's in disguise he was, but Biddy Mulligan ain't asily desaved in a man."

"Do you want more?" asked Harry severely.

"Shall I bring your rascally agents to testify?"

"No, no! Oh, leave me! Leave me!" The discovered villain was utterly overcome.

"Certainly I will leave you. But not here. I have other quarters picked out for you."

It is not necessary to continue the details of this exciting scene. Ere an hour more had elapsed, Will Landers found himself the tenant of a prison cell, in the same strong building to which all his confederates, with the exception of Bill Bates, had preceded him. Bill had, so far, managed to keep out of the clutches of the law.

Nor is there any need to let down the curtain upon our story slowly. We had better let it fall at once, and tell, in brief sentences, the future disposition of our characters.

As for the villains, they received their just deserts at the hands of the law. There was little difficulty in proving the facts of the abduction, and Will Landers's connection with it, and the utmost sentence of the law was imposed on the gang of base confederates for their villainous deed.

But the worst punishment to the chief villain was the loss of the estate which he had plotted to retain. The terms of the will were decided to have been accomplished in Lucile Moreland's favor, and the whole estate was handed over to her by the courts.

She did not long stay single. The involuntary declaration of George Wilson of his love for her was not without its influence upon her heart. When he again spoke with her upon the subject, he did not find her cold. She had learned to love him in return, and they are now the happiest of married pairs.

Perhaps the most gratified with what had taken place was Sadie Lawson. She had let herself be drawn, from mercenary motives, into marriage with a man whom she despised, and the breaking of the match was to her a happy relief. She vowed never to marry for money, after this one experience of the need of love. Whether she did so or not, we cannot say. She is now the wife of a rich banker, but folks say there is love as well as money in the match.

As for Jolly Jim, he is still a boy. He has a year or two more on his head, but not much more wisdom or discretion on his shoulders. He acts yet as Harry Keen's apprentice, and is so shrewd and apt that Harry swears he will yet be one of the sharpest detectives on the force.

Jolly has not forgotten, and is not likely to forget, his fair friend, Biddy Mulligan. Biddy changes her kitchen as often as of old, but Jolly always finds her out in her new quarters, and he has gained as good an idea of the cookery of the New York kitchens as any three boys of his size in the city.

"She's allers got summat nice in the oven fur me," he declares, "and as long as she knows so well how to pervide fur my sweet-tooth, I'm not goin' back on Biddy. And who kin tell? Maybe some day we'll have a kitchen all to ourselves, and nobody there but Biddy and me and the baby. Whoopee! won't that be gay? What do you say to that, Biddy?"

"Hold yer whist, will ye now, and stop yer blarneyin'," answers the delighted girl.

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Wilson again spoke, more indignantly than before.

"I love Lucile Moreland. I acknowledge it. But I have never said these words before, and I would rather die than injure her. And the man that accuses me of it does so at his peril!"

"I was told—I thought—" began the faltering villain.

"You thought," cried the detective, indignantly, "to make it appear that she had broken the will. You had her abducted, and then set afloat this story of her absconding. I have found the poor captive, in the hands of your confederates. If you do not believe, look. She is here!"

In the doorway stood a fair-faced, beautiful girl, the golden hair floating above her eyes. Her face was filled with shame of her false cousin, rather than indignation.

The confused villain dropped into the chair beside him, quite unnerved by this sudden apparition. Sadie took a step forward, her black eyes fixed glitteringly upon her rival. Yet a look of relief was on her face. She touched her brother on the arm.

"Come," she said, briefly. "And let us thank God that I have escaped!"

"There is a lie afloat here!" yelled Will, with sudden rage. "Stay where you are, Sadie. This matter must be settled. I know nothing about this affair, and will not rest under the imputation. Lucile has broken the will. I am free from its command, and will not marry her, if she should pray for it."

"Do you mean that?" asked the officer quickly.

"Yes. I am betrothed to this woman here, and will marry no other."

"Gentlemen and ladies, you all hear," cried Harry. "You are witnesses that he has refused Lucile Moreland's hand. She has never refused his. He has broken the will, not she. The estate descends to her, and he has made himself a beggar by his villainy."

"It is a lie!" cried Will, starting up. "It is a trap, and you shall not catch me in it. Lucile broke the will by absconding with my rival."

"She was carried away by your agents," answered Harry calmly.

"I defy you to prove it!"

"I can easily do so. They are all in custody."

"What do I care for your hired ruffians? You have bought some men to swear to a lie!"

"Well, then, if you want further proof, you shall have it. I can bring evidence that on the night of September 13th, Will Landers drove from his stables alone, with a closed carriage. On the same night, an hour later, Lucile Moreland was taken from her prison, and conveyed to a more distant one."

"And what if you can?" sneered the villain. "This gentleman, Mr. Howard Lawson, can testify that on that night I took him up, and we drove out to Ike Merry's together."

"A neat dodge, but it won't work," answered the officer. "I have proof that they were the same carriages. Step forward, Jolly."

At this demand Jolly emerged from the group in the background, his face full of all its boyish assurance.

"Tell your story, my boy."

"Ain't got much of a story," rejoined Jolly. "'Cept that I've been snatched twice while I was trackin' the pretty lady. But 'bout that carriage, I seed it when it was carryin' her away, and I seed it since in Mr. Landers's stables. I'll go a peck of horse-chestnuts it's the same."

"Mr. Prime, do you recognize this gentleman?" asked the detective.

"Yes. It is Jason Trueblood, who has an office in the same building with me."

"Where he receives letters from the jailer of this prisoner," supplied the detective.

"It is false!" cried the trembling villain. "It is all a base plot!"

"Not quite. I am not done with my witnesses yet. Bridget Mulligan."

The rosy-cheeked Irish lass stepped eagerly forward.

"Have you seen this man before?"

"Faix an' I have, then!" she cried, after a brief inspection. "Sure an' I seen him at Masther Joe Mills's house when this purty leddy was locked up there. It's in disguise he was, but Biddy Mulligan ain't asily desaved in a man."

"Do you want more?" asked Harry severely.

"Shall I bring your rascally agents to testify?"

"No, no! Oh, leave me! Leave me!" The discovered villain was utterly overcome.

"Certainly I will leave you. But not here. I have other quarters picked out for you."

It is not necessary to continue the details of this exciting scene. Ere an hour more had elapsed, Will Landers found himself the tenant of a prison cell, in the same strong building to which all his confederates, with the exception of Bill Bates, had preceded him. Bill had, so far, managed to keep out of the clutches of the law.

Nor is there any need to let down the curtain upon our story slowly. We had better let it fall at once, and tell, in brief sentences, the future disposition of our characters.

As for the villains, they received their just deserts at the hands of the law. There was little difficulty in proving the facts of the abduction, and Will Landers's connection with it, and the utmost sentence of the law was imposed on the gang of base confederates for their villainous deed.

But the worst punishment to the chief villain was the loss of the estate which he had plotted to retain. The terms of the will were decided to have been accomplished in Lucile Moreland's favor, and the whole estate was handed over to her by the courts.

She did not long stay single. The involuntary declaration of George Wilson of his love for her was not without its influence upon her heart. When he again spoke with her upon the subject, he did not find her cold. She had learned to love him in return, and they are now the happiest of married pairs.

Perhaps the most gratified with what had taken place was Sadie Lawson. She had let herself be drawn, from mercenary motives, into marriage with a man whom she despised, and the breaking of the match was to her a happy relief. She vowed never to marry for money, after this one experience of the need of love. Whether she did so or not, we cannot say. She is now the wife of a rich banker, but folks say there is love as well as money in the match.

As for Jolly Jim, he is still a boy. He has a year or two more on his head, but not much more wisdom or discretion on his shoulders. He acts yet as Harry Keen's apprentice, and is so shrewd and apt that Harry swears he will yet be one of the sharpest detectives on the force.

Jolly has not forgotten, and is not likely to forget, his fair friend, Biddy Mulligan. Biddy changes her kitchen as often as of old, but Jolly always finds her out in her new quarters, and he has gained as good an idea of the cookery of the New York kitchens as any three boys of his size in the city.

"She's allers got summat nice in the oven fur me," he declares, "and as long as she knows so well how to pervide fur my sweet-tooth, I'm not goin' back on Biddy. And who kin tell? Maybe some day we'll have a kitchen all to ourselves, and nobody there but Biddy and me and the baby. Whoopee! won't that be gay? What do you say to that, Biddy?"

"Hold yer whist, will ye now, and stop yer blarneyin'," answers the delighted girl.

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